

Duck Shooting and



Hunting Sketches



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Duck Shooting and Hunting Sketches

By William C. Hazelton

Being Narratives of Duck-Hunting Experiences; Habits of Our Wild-Fowl and Methods of Hunting Them; Facts Concerning Their Migration, Breeding Grounds, Food, Etc. Also a Few Short Articles Concerning Some Other of Our Game Birds, and Several Interesting Anecdotes of the Hunting Dog.



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Dedication

This book is respectfully dedicated to
my life-long friends,

Dr. William L. Baum
and
Mr. Dennis S. Sattler,

of Chicago, Illinois

By ~~Transcriber~~
MAY 19 1919



"After the Day's Sport is Over." Canvasbacks, Long Lake, Illinois.

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Sunrise at Senachwine Lake, Illinois, on the Illinois River.



"THE OLD RELIABLE CHESAPEAKE."

"Water King."

Courtesy of L. K. Mason, Hastings, Iowa.

The Art of Duck Shooting.

The wild rice dips, the wild bends,
And rustles in the breeze,
As down the marsh the west wind sends,
Its message from the trees.

BY ERNEST MCGAFFEY.

Duck shooting is a science; likewise an art. The seasoned duck shooter smiles at the quail hunter, the snipe shooter, and the man who eases around in a "buck-board" after prairie chickens. They are mostly "parlor" shooters in his opinion. "Whisper," now—men take their lives in their hands quite a bit who follow the sport of duck shooting. The marshes and lakes take something of a toll of human life in that respect, and more than a few good staunch fellows have gone under in the "sink-holes," perished from exposure, or drowned in sight of shore while following their favorite hobby. You need to be some resemblance to a man to go after ducks year in and year out.

Spring shooting has mostly been cut out; and a good thing, too. Some lively sessions I have seen occasionally, in the Spring time, when the ice came down on the "blinds." Narrow squeaks at times, and rowing aimlessly in sudden blizzards, stiff fingers grabbing at ice-mailed decoys, and squalls that made gathering dead birds no child's play. Well, I've weathered it, but I just make bold to say in passing that you need to be a good swimmer, a good man with a pair of oars, and as tough as a leather hinge to stand the racket.

Fall shooting isn't quite as dangerous, but you have to watch the weather conditions, and mind your eye generally. Duck shooting has so many angles, that it has both the safe and easy degrees as well as the other ones, and by and large it is the most fascinating sport of all with the shotgun.

Shooting over decoys, "pass" shooting, "jumping" ducks, "tolling" ducks, and shooting from a battery, make up the principal ways of getting the birds.

Decoy shooting can be had with either wooden or canvas decoys, or live wild decoys. These latter are mostly used in mallard shooting. Wooden decoys are mainly used in shooting bluebills, canvasback and redheads, although many mallards and teal are shot over wooden decoys. Bluebills and ringbills decoy easiest. Mallards come in to live wild mallard decoys where they would not look at the wooden counterfeits. Pintails decoy to mixed pintail and mallard decoys, and teal will come to all teal, or a sprinkling of teal and mallard. Goldeneye, ruddies, butterball, widgeon, wood ducks, spoonbills and other "trash" ducks I have killed intermittently over various decoys. Canvasbacks require canvasback decoys, and redheads decoy best to redhead decoys, although some canvasbacks will not hurt in the flock of decoys.

"Pass" shooting only requires good markmanship and a close-shooting, hard-hitting gun. A reliable retriever is also a necessity in this branch of the sport. It is simply finding out where the birds come and go from one body of water to another and stationing yourself on dry ground and shooting them on the flight. Winged birds are readily gathered by a trained dog, and the sport is mainly dependent on accurate shooting.

Jumping ducks may be done by going in on the comparatively shallow overflowed river bottoms or along the edges of lakes and sloughs, and shooting the birds as they jump. Or it may be practiced from a boat, with one man to paddle at the stern of the skiff or duck-boat and a man in the bow to do the shooting. Or a man may paddle about by himself and drop the paddle as the ducks climb up.

Tolling ducks is to hide in the cover along shore and draw the birds within gunshot by having a dog trained to the job lure them in by jumping about on the shore. I never had any experience at this style of duck shooting.

Battery shooting, or "sink-box" shooting, is by having a box weighted and sunk almost to the water's edge and surrounded by a big flock of decoys. As the birds come in the shooter rises from his cramped position in the box and fires. It is an effective way of getting ducks when they won't come in to the shore "blinds," but keep to the middle of the large lakes.

In all grades and kinds of duck shooting the knowledge necessary of the birds' habits, the effect of the weather on their flight, where they are feeding, the manner of building a "blind" and setting out decoys, the best spot for a "blind," the shifting of a "blind" when the wind shifts, the way to sit and keep still in a "blind," the rule in shooting from "blinds," and hundreds of other lesser and greater vital requirements make up what might be called the scientific duck shooter's arbitrary book of rules.

Almost any man can break a few hundred blue rocks, buy a good dog and do something at quail without further delay, especially if he goes out with some one who understands the way to get "Bob White." But each and every duck shooter must learn the inner peculiarities of the duck-

shooting game for himself. And each year that he goes out he will pick up some new wrinkles from some grizzly old "pusher," or from some one of the canny boys that lie around the lakes.

You may shoot fifty pintail off of a high, brush-built "blind" from a comfortable platform one day, and the next day, with a still, bright day succeeding a dark and blowy yesterday, be compelled to take a narrow duck-boat and go out in open water and build a grass "blind" almost level with your boat to get any shooting. Ducks are very queer "critters," and I have seen them do unaccountable things.

I have been at the lakes when some seasoned old pirate would sit grumblingly around the fire in early Spring, only deserting his warm place to go outside and look at the sky, or spit on his finger and hold it up to see which way the wind was blowing. Meanwhile the other not so hardened shooters would be working their heads off to bring in a dozen ducks a day. And then some morning old Groucher would be missing and would come at night loaded to the stumbling point with ducks. He had been studying the weather, the flight, the "signs," and when he got ready had poled and cut his way in to where the birds were feeding and had made a "killing."

That, of course, was in the old days. Days when there was no "limit," either to the birds, or to the number you could shoot.

Canvasback shooting over decoys is the acme of the sport. Shooting over live wild mallard decoys runs it a close second. Teal shooting is good sport, and bluebill shooting over decoys, with occasional ringbills, widgeon, pintail, teal or even mallards dropping in at times is ex-



Teal Ducks, Thompson's Lake, Illinois, Ernest McGaffey

citing work. There is no branch of the sport which does not have its particular charm. When the Kankakee marshes were in their prime a man could get all the ducks he could pack in by knocking over a few birds and setting them up for decoys. Now the cornfields stretch where the marshes rippled, and ducks, except the barn-yard variety, are indeed a curiosity.

For the deep-water ducks, canvasbacks, redheads, blue-bills, etc., lake shooting is more generally followed, while timber shooting along the rivers in the overflowed river bottoms is where the best mallard, pintail and teal shooting is had. Some lakes give good teal shooting, but they like the timber pretty well.

All sorts of rules have been given, some of them based on methods of apparently mathematical exactness, as to how to hold your gun to shoot ducks. The fact is, the shots vary as the flight of the birds does. To get the center of the charge where the duck will be as his line of flight crosses the flight of the shot is the trick, and it requires years of practice, and a natural adaptability to master the secret. I have known men who were good shots at everything but ducks. And I have never known a high-class duck-shot who could not quickly qualify as a shot at any kind of flying game. The reason for this is that duck shooting gives all the angles, towering, right and left quarterers, straight-away, right and left quartering towerers, incomers, straight overhead shots, incoming left and right quartering shots, dropping shots, straight-up rising shots, twisters of every description, etc.

Ten or twenty years' practice at these angles either develops the crack duck-shot or it develops the duck-shot who finds his best lines and sticks as much as possible to them.

As the shooting is practically open, and as birds often come in and go out from a "blind" with a variety of movement, a man can pick his moment to shoot.

For instance, if he is weak on incomers, he can wait until a bird swings. If he is good at straight-aways he can pick birds in the flock as they are going away. The high-class shot takes them any way. But even a medium good shot can make a very respectable showing by choosing his birds and his time to shoot.

The building of a "blind" and the setting out of decoys is the last word in the art of duck shooting. It is so wonderfully well done in the case of the expert, and so bungingly executed in the hands of the tyro, that there is no possible comparison between the two. Color and size, fidelity to the surrounding cover, and easiness of coming in and going out are vital features of a well-builded "blind." Accuracy as to the general habits of the birds is to be followed in the setting out of the decoys, some species being prone to closer formation than others, and more regular alignment.

Duck calls are very successfully used in mallard shooting, and when wooden decoys are used they are often exceedingly handy. In shooting over live wild mallard decoys, the decoys will do the "calling," as they join in the sport with a most uncanny delight. It is rather a shock for the novice to see a drake wild decoy raising himself in the water to call down some unsuspecting comrade from the far North, and the newcomers rarely fail to set their wings and come in fraternizingly to the wild decoys.

"An' if that ain't cheatin' why I'd like to know."

Splendid mallard shooting is sometimes had in the wet cornfields, and in the stubbles, particularly in the corn-fields. With live decoys and a shock of corn to hide in, a man can get the cream of the shooting at times.

East, West, North and South the tendency is to restrict the limit. I think this is all right up to a certain point. But fix a season limit, say seventy-five birds, and let a man kill his limit in a day if he can, and if he wants to. Men who have followed the sport know how many days are drawn blank in the shooting, and if a day does come when the conditions are all right it is more or less of a joke to shoot ten birds a day. Make the limit even fifty birds, but don't put the lid on at ten birds a day. A man might get that many ducks at one shot, teal particularly.

Anyway, what is that long, trailing ribbon over the trees, dipping, winding and curling over the river bottom? Mallards, by all that's lucky. The northern flight is on. Get out the 12-gauge, sort over the shells, break it gently to the Missus and receive her (call it benediction) and set the alarm clock for 4 a. m. The old instincts are alive again, the old blood is jumping, the duck-shooter's primal savage characteristics are beginning to assert themselves. Yes, there's nothing like it, and I have "followed the gun" for forty-three years, come next Micklemas, or any other Mas that happens to be roosting about the premises.

Forty-three years I've followed the gun,
Warp and woof by the woodland spun;
Lakes where the bluebills curve and wheel,
Arrowy flights of the green-wing teal,
Pasture lands where the jacksnipe hide,
Grassy stretch of the prairies wide.
Counting the seasons, one by one;
Forty-three years I've followed the gun.

The Canvasback.

"King of the Game Birds of the Continent."

The royal bird! What a keen, racy-looking fellow he is!
Every inch of him a thoroughbred!

The canvasback is undoubtedly the most wary of all our wild-fowl and his keenness of vision is only equalled by the goldeneye. His flesh depends for its flavor on the food that he eats, and since for so many years he fed in the localities where the so-called wild celery abounded, which is really a water grass, his reputation was gained as a fine-flavored bird. There is a doubt, however, whether he is any more of a delicacy than other members of the duck family who have opportunities to feed on wild celery.

The Chesapeake Bay in the East; Currituck, Pamlico and Albemarle Sounds in the South; and Lakes Koshkonong, Butte des Morts, Poygan and Winneconne in Wisconsin; and Fox and Long Lakes in Illinois, are noted resorts of the canvasback.

I take great pleasure in watching the canvasbacks at Lincoln Park, Chicago. There are many varieties of live wild ducks there, but the canvasback plainly shows he is not an ordinary bird.

While shooting one morning on Swan Lake, near Henry, Illinois, many years ago, I was stationed about a quarter of a mile from Abe Kleinman, the veteran duck hunter of the Calumet marshes, and I could see most of his shooting, and he killed three dozen canvasbacks before 11 o'clock. His



CANVASBACK DUCK.

(*Aythya valisneria*).

$\frac{1}{2}$ Life-size

decoys were set near shore, where the birds had been feeding. During the balance of the time that I was shooting at Swan Lake the canvasbacks came no more to this particular spot to feed. Abe had "burnt them out." I killed thirty redheads that same morning.

At this time the shooting at Swan Lake and Senachwine in the overflowed bottom and timber lands resembled a battle. The shooting was continuous and ducks were in sight in some direction nearly all the time. The flooded territory, including the main channel of the river, was from 2 to 4 miles wide. The river banks were overflowed all along the river except at a few high spots.

I always use canvasback decoys, with a few bluebills, for deep-water ducks, and have never owned a redhead decoy. Many times have I picked out a few canvasbacks from a large flock of bluebills when they would come into the decoys. I doubt whether the canvasbacks would have come in by themselves, but they came in with the bluebills.

The canvasback is always uneasy and restless on rainy days, constantly flying about, and it is on these days that the best shooting is to be obtained.

The main body of birds will be always found well away from shore on some large lake or river. At intervals during the day, small parties of ducks, as if unable to withstand the temptation any longer, will leave the main body of birds and fly towards the shallower water near shore to feed. Then if the hunter has his decoys set in the right spot, he will have some fine sport.

When canvasbacks are disturbed much they become very cautious, remaining out in open water during the day and only approaching the shore at night to feed.

Duck Shooting As a Pastime.

To follow the way the wild duck takes,
To the twilight of the grassy lakes,
To the glory of the Yukon hills.

—*A Day on the Yukon.*

What sport can be compared to duck shooting for real enjoyment with a gun?

Hunting quail with a good dog is enjoyable, of course, and also prairie chickens and ruffed grouse furnish excellent sport, but for real pleasure what can equal hunting the various varieties of wild-fowl?

One of the greatest fascinations of wild-fowl shooting is its constantly changing conditions of weather and many different species of wild ducks almost daily met with. Today you may be shooting over decoys, tomorrow on a duck-pass or flyway, and the day following "jumping" ducks from the borders of a marsh or river.

Duck shooting is also a greater test of your skill with the gun, for you get shots at many different angles and at varying speeds. The wild duck is a marvelously swift flier.

And on the splendid fall days all Nature is at her best, and could anything be more invigorating to your health and tending more toward longevity than to cast aside your cares and go duck hunting?

I have memories of many glorious days spent on the Des Plaines, Kankakee, Illinois, Platte and Missouri Rivers and the lakes of Wisconsin. The Illinois River is my favorite hunting ground, however. Coke's Bayou, Au Sable Island, Goose Island, Twin Islands, Bardwell's Island, Sugar Island, Au Sable Lake, Senachwine Lake, Swan Lake, and many adjacent localities were places of keen sport to me.

My First Duck.

The noisy bittern wheeled his spiral way.—*Bryant.*

BY ROSS KINER.

Do you remember the very first duck you ever brought to bag? You don't? Has it been so very long ago, and you have killed so many since, that you have forgotten quite? Well, I do. Many and many the time had the single-barrel muzzle-loader roared, spitting fleecy smoke and shredded newspaper in the wake of a small charge of 5's, trying to overtake a bunch of scurrying, cloud-scraping pintail, or neck-cranning, towering mallard, but the duck was never where the shot was, and the shot was never where the duck was, and beside, like the flea, a boy is never still, you know, and after I stood and crouched in one location as long as I could stand it, I would move, then, and not till then, would the ducks come and wheel and circle over the very spot that I had just deserted.

It was March, a wind-blown day with winter's chill still gripping. The muzzle-loader stood at home behind the kitchen door, and in my hands was a Remington 12-gauge hammer gun; not the model with the low circular hammers, but an earlier one, black barrels, with high hammers that stood upright like rabbit's ears. My stepfather had borrowed the gun for me from a neighbor.

All that day I had chased here and there, up and down the river flats, in the vast Jefferd's and Pritchard pastures, whanging at pintails far too high, cutting futile holes in the air yards behind the rocking bluebills. Along toward

the late afternoon I started homeward. sometimes in the rutty, chuck-holed country road, at times angling across the bare March fields.

Passing one farmhouse perched upon the brow of a barren hill of sand, just at the supper hour, a little lad came out and started toward the pole and slough-hay roofed barn, singing: "Come to the house, Papa, and get a piece of Yankee bread and butter." Hungry? So hungry that I thought I would never reach home. At the eastern line of Fritzche's pasture grew a long high row of willows. I approached them with caution; on the other side was an overflowed ditch, and once upon a time in the Springs that had gone before, I had bellied up to that fence corner, sneaked up on what looked to me like a million ducks, poked the old single-barrel through the fence, and, "She snapped!"

I approached the willows Indian-like. There were no ducks in the ditch; so, Remington across my knees, I sat down behind the fence to rest awhile. There came a sudden "We-ee! We-ee!" of slanting wings, and a pair of weary pintail come to rest not 30 yards away from me. "Buck fever?" Yes, I had it, but in the end that pair of dancing blackish barrels came for one brief instance square between those weary ducks. "Whang!" Picture to yourself a breathless boy racing around the end of that willow fence, gaining the other side just as the hen struggled into the air. "Whang!" Breathless or no it was a clean kill, and then, regardless of chill wind and icy water, heedless of short-legged boots, and the danger of pneumonia, that boy waded waist deep and hand retrieved his game.

That never-to-be-forgotten night he swaggered into Gresser's store and flopping down that luckless pair of pintail,



From col. Chi. Acad. Sciences.

BALD-PATE DUCK.

$\frac{1}{2}$ Life-size.

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received in coin of the U. S. A. the princely sum of two bits. Why didn't he eat them? Why? Because only by swaggering into the store and selling his game there before the assembled clientèle, could he at one bound attain the prestige that he craved.

* * *

The Calls of Birds.

Oft as the woodlark piped her farewell song,
With wistful eyes pursue the setting sun.

—*William Cullen Bryant.*

How strange are the calls and songs of many of the wild birds! Having studied the various varieties of wild-fowl considerable, I have been interested in noting their cries, whether of fear or joy, or signals of sociability to their fellows. They have, indeed, a language, and I have heard them call out in the middle of the night whose hearts were bursting for very happiness and joy of living. The red-head duck, at certain times, when in large bodies on a lake or large river, and impatient to go near shore and feed, call to each other exactly as a cat does to her kittens. But the strangest call I have ever heard is that of the prairie pigeon or plover. This is the papabotte of the Creoles (literally “little butter-bird”), and who is at home on the prairies of Louisiana, although it nests in the Northern States. The bird takes flight with quivering wings, as if loath to go, and utters a long-drawn, tremulous, and wonderfully sweet and plaintive cry that almost seems to long for other lands. The poetic and mystic cry ever lingers in the memory.

Then there is the bittern, the great blue heron, various species of rails, and many other water birds.

An Eighteen-Mile Row On the Missouri River and a Few Mallards.

I see their dark battalions on winnowing pinions urge.—*McLellan.*

Every seasoned duck hunter can remember some particular day's sport in which he had some peculiar experience out of the ordinary, such as finding ducks in unexpected places, etc. He may not have made a large bag, but something unusual happening causes him to recollect it.

During several years' residence at Omaha, Nebraska, I did considerable hunting on the Missouri River from that point, and also made several trips to the Platte River.

The Missouri is a difficult river to navigate at many points. Above and below Omaha we were forced to use two pairs of oars on a ducking boat, and then there were places where it was barely possible to breast the current. The best shooting grounds near Omaha were down the river and we would make a trip of from 15 to 20 miles in a day and return, having to start on our return trip back up the river in the middle of the afternoon or we would not be able to reach the city that same day.

One day in November I started to row down the Missouri, not knowing just where I was going in particular, as ducks did not seem to be very numerous. I had about twenty decoys in my boat, intending to set them out and try my luck if I could find any spot that the ducks seemed to favor.

Rowing along quietly near shore with the gun within reach as was my custom, suddenly a pair of mallards flew out from the trees bordering the river bank Ah! a chance for a double, I thought, as I seized the gun. At the crack

of the first barrel one dropped; holding above the second one's head, down he came at the discharge of the second barrel.

Resuming my oars, I had traveled a mile or so further when a lone mallard set out from shore in great haste to get out of danger. A charge of No. 5's well placed stopped his career then and there.

I journeyed a couple of miles further and had not seen another duck and no prospects of using my decoys as there were no ducks in flight.

Suddenly there was a great fluttering of wings from a bunch of willow trees just in front of my boat and a pair of mallards were trying their best to break all speed records for ducks in trying to get out of range. Two well-directed shots ended their earthly plans right there and they were in duck heaven with the others, if there is such a place.

I now had five mallards and loitered around an hour or so and ate the lunch I had brought with me, making some coffee over a fire on the river bank.

As there did not seem to be any ducks moving and very few in the country I finally started home, returning on the opposite side of the river on my way up stream.

On my return trip (I had been about nine miles down the Missouri) I was fortunate enough to get shots at another pair of mallards and they met the same fate as their predecessors. That made me seven birds.

Finally, and lastly, a solitary mallard was bagged just as the others had been, as he flushed from shore at the approach of my boat.

Now, eight mallards is not a large bag, but each one had been killed singly and I had not fired any other shots except at these eight ducks and had scored the eight straight.

The Green-Wing Teal.

During many different conversations with various duck hunters during the past few years I have discovered that the little green-wing teal is a very popular bird with the majority of sportsmen. Also it is the general opinion that both the green-wing and blue-wing are decreasing in numbers more rapidly than some other varieties of our wild ducks. Just why this should be so is somewhat hard to understand. Undoubtedly, however, their readiness to decoy has much to do with their lessening numbers.

The green-wing teal is a common migrant, and is found over the whole of North America, from the far North to the extreme South, being quite plentiful at Currituck Sound.

They are a very hardy little bird, and can withstand extremely cold weather, unlike their cousin, the blue-wing.

The green-wing teal will decoy readily to any variety of decoys, possibly to mallard decoys the best.

They have a very swift flight but are much more erratic than the blue-wing and quicker to see danger, and if you fire a shot at a flock flying by, every duck in the bunch will shoot up into the air in a different direction.

They are a handsome little bird, especially in their Spring plumage, and their cheerful whistle at that season of the year is very pleasant to the ear.

Late in the Fall the green-wing teal sometimes congregate or merge several smaller flocks into one large flock and feed in some shallow waters at the edge of a lake or sand bars on a river, and I have sometimes known a large number to be killed at a discharge into such a flock.



GREEN-WINGED TEAL.

(*Anas crecca*).
4 5 Life-size.

A Duck Shoot on the North Platte River.

We catch the voice of rivers and the sigh of trees.—*Rhymes of Stream and Forest.*

BY J. F. PARKS.

The leaves have turned from emerald to old gold, crimson and brown. The air is becoming more and more crisp and invigorating each morning as the nature lover goes forth to tackle the perplexing problem of his daily business grind. Old Jack Frost is now working over-time in penciling the landscape with his withering breath, thus mutely, but forcefully, reminding one that the Fall of the year is again with us and that grim old Winter is getting ready to put Nature to sleep for another brief resting spell.

At such times, the thoughts of the duck hunter naturally turn to his annual outing, in quest of the web-footed denizens of the marsh and river.

The trusty old hammerless is taken out of the gun case, thoroughly oiled and cleaned, the waist waders are inspected for possible leaks, a new supply of shells are purchased, the gun closet ransacked for hunting togs and even the faithful old Chesapeake, who has been lying around listlessly all Summer dreaming of former hunting experiences, now seems to manifest an unnatural restlessness, as though he, too, was beginning to feel the near approach of another outing.

Then one day a telegram comes, reading something like this: "There is a small flight of northern ducks in at present and I think the big flight will be on in a few days.

Hold yourself in readiness to come on receipt of my wire.”
(Signed): “HARRY.”

The looked-for message arrives in a few days and it reads: “Northern flight is in. Come and bring a friend.”

My shooting chum, Fred, is telephoned, then all is bustle and excitement to catch the 5:55 p. m. train for the little town of Bayard, Nebraska.

Arriving at our destination, Harry meets us with the customary hearty, Western welcome. He had his complete camping outfit loaded on a lumber wagon and we are off at once for the old North Platte River, distant three miles to the southwest.

We establish our camp on a little island in the Platte in a fine grove of trees, protected from the wind, and soon have everything in ship shape for our headquarters for the next week or ten days.

Aside from being ideal from the standpoint of comfort, our camp site is surrounded on all sides by points of much historical interest. About a mile up stream is the old “Sheedy” or “Seven Up” ranch and branding corrals, and just opposite is “Mike Maxie” Island containing 200 acres of land, while just above this is the old Deadwood and Sidney stage trail. Looking westward, one can see the old grass-grown trail of the California gold-seekers of “’49,” and the trail of the Mormons, on the south side of the river, where one can almost imagine now, he can still see the long, phantom-like trains of caravans, drawn by gaunt, lumbering oxen, with men, women and children alongside, enveloped in a cloud of suffocating dust, bent on reaching their new homes in the far-away valley of the Great Salt Lake.

Today, however, there remains but little physical evidence of this great event in the early history of our country, save for the mounds of earth and stone, in rude, wooden inclosures, that dot the trail here and there, which serve to mark the last resting place of the sturdy pioneers who fell by the wayside, and never reached their new Eldorado. And last, but not by any means least, is the great North Platte River, which some wit has characterized as a stream "Two miles wide and two inches deep," but the writer would rather say in regard to this, after having to wade this stream a number of times, that it is two hours wide and two miles deep, but for all that it is a grand old stream and will always be, thanks to the new Migratory Bird Law, the duck hunter's Mecca when the northern flight is on in the Fall.

A good night's rest prepares us for an early morning start and we proceed to occupy our blinds, just as "Old Sol" begins to paint the eastern horizon with the first flushes of the coming day.

Harry had already constructed his blind on a sand bar in the middle of the river. The writer is located on a little grass and brush-covered island about 300 yards to the east of Harry's blind, and Fred locates his blind on an island about the same distance east of my blind.

In going out to the blinds, flock after flock of ducks raise from the water but no attention is paid to them. We are soon comfortably settled with our Chesapeakes quivering with excitement at our feet, the ducks have settled and a stillness prevails almost oppressive in its intensity, broken only now and then by the wooden decoys knocking together in the swirl of the rapid current, or by the splash of a muskrat as it dives off an old sodden log, or perhaps the faint

rustle of a cunning old mink returning to its den after a night of slaughter among its legitimate prey, when of a sudden the stillness is broken by a sharp whip-like report from Fred's blind that echoes and re-echoes on the distant hills.

Bang, bang, comes from each blind all along the line and the air is filled with pinions. Ducks to the right of us, ducks to the left of us, quacked and thundered. Mallards, pintail, widgeon, teal, canvasbacks, redheads, bluebills, spoonbills and what not, pass and repass for about an hour, then all is quiet again along the Platte, and the same stillness prevails.

"Hello, John," from Harry's blind, "what luck?"

"Pretty fair," said I, "what did you do?"

"I got a few," said Harry.

"Say, did you see the retrieve that Rex made?"

"No."

"Well, you should have seen it. It certainly was great. You see that island over there to your left?"

"Yes."

"Well, he followed a mallard across that island, then across the swift-running channel on the other side, and got his bird out on the bank of the river about 200 yards from the shore. He was gone at least ten minutes. Some retrieve, even for a Chesapeake; don't you think so?"

"Surely some retrieve, Harry, even for a Chesapeake," I assented.

"Down Otter Boy," to my dog, "here comes a pair of mallards."

Bang, bang, and both of the old greenheads crumple in midair and come tumbling to a sand bar to my right.



KING-RAIL.
(*Rallus elegans.*)

$\frac{1}{2}$ Life-size.

"There, that's a good fellow; go fetch the other one." And as the grand dog handed me the last bird he seemed to say by the expression in his little yellow eyes, "Did I do it to suit you, old pardner?" Yes, bless his old heart, he did do it just exactly to suit me and I did not waste any time in making him understand that I appreciated his game effort.

Retrieving the game after it is knocked down is at least two-thirds of the sport in duck shooting for me and if I could not have a game Chesapeake for a shooting companion on a duck hunt, the game would not be worth the candle. Besides, I hold that it is nothing short of a crime for a man to go out on the marsh or river and shoot ducks indiscriminately, with no chance in many instances whatsoever, to retrieve them. It is downright brutality, and it should be stopped as far as possible by National enactment.

A big percentage of the ducks that are killed in this country each year are left to rot or what is worse, the wounded ones are left to slowly starve to death, yet men will do this thing right along and call themselves "Sportsmen." They are not sportsmen at all; they are just simply game hogs, that's all, and don't know it.

Otter Boy crouches and points his intelligent head up the river. At first nothing can be seen, but a moment later a faint streak is discerned on the horizon, which immediately develops into a well-defined line of ducks coming down wind at the rate of a hundred miles an hour and headed directly for my blind. In another moment they are over the decoys, but out of range, high in the air. They fly about a quarter of a mile beyond me and it looks like they are going on. But they have seen the decoys and are turning. In coming back they make one wide circle around the decoys, then

come right back with wings set, with a swish, all the time talking to each other in their unintelligible duck language, probably saying to themselves, "Well, here is where it must be safe, with all these other ducks swimming around," when bang, bang, rings out from the innocent little island and three of the noble old canvasbacks hit the water about the same time.

Otter Boy had all he could do retrieving these birds from the swift-running channel, but he gets them all without mishap and is soon crouching in the blind with me, eager and anxious for more.

In an hour or so the flight is over until the evening flight commences to come in and we go back to our dear little temporary home on the island, to eat and smoke and talk over the many incidents of shooting, thus cementing a friendship among kindred spirits that will last until time is no more.

These experiences are repeated with more or less diversion each morning and evening until the time comes to return to our home and loved ones.

Looking back from a prominent position on the "hurricane" deck of the old lumber wagon as we proceed to the depot, our eyes longingly dwell on the old familiar blinds, the long stretches of the sandy river with its innumerable little islands and sand bars; the dear old camp site, now but a precious memory, until it all fades from sight and we are at the railroad station, where the curtain goes down on another outing with the ducks, the memory of which will remain green long after our eyes become too dim to see the sights on our gun barrels, but we will still have the pleasure of taking our little grandsons on our knees in after years and regaling them with the pleasurable incidents connected with the trip.

The Art of Calling Ducks.

Of shadowed nooks upon some quiet river's shore—*Rhymes of Stream and Forest.*

BY R. P. HOLLAND.

Many and diversified are the opinions of duck shooters as to the merits of a duck call, regardless of how it is made or who blows it. Some insist that at best it is a detriment, while you find others who think a good bag is impossible without a call in the blind.

A friend of mine who knows the duck game from A to Z will finally admit, when he becomes tired of hearing me argue the question, that occasionally a call will attract their attention, thereby gaining you a shot that otherwise would have been lost.

And still I have had this same fellow when in a blind with me and a bunch of old wise mallards were circling, trying to make up their minds whether or not to run the risk, nudge me in the side with his elbow and whisper, "Talk to 'em!" "Talk to 'em!" Then when they had swung back to the call and were making their last circle, some of them with feet hanging, he would sink his fingers into my leg as though trying to shut off the call to keep from scaring them.

Personally, I would just as soon go shooting without the gun as without the call. To me there is no comparison in sitting in a blind with everything quiet, while a bunch circles you and decoys, and the same bunch coming in with the call in action. In the first place every duck in the flock is looking with both those little beady eyes for something wrong. If you happen to move a trifle one of them is sure to see you.

There is absolutely no question but that when properly used a call is of the greatest benefit to the man shooting over decoys. Go down around Big Lake, Arkansas; the lower Mississippi; the marshes along the South Coast; mingle with the men who in years gone by have made their living shooting wild-fowl, and running from the upper pocket of their coats or shirts, as the case may be, to the nearest buttonhole you will notice a piece of string. On the end of that string is a "squawker." They wear them the year round, as much a part of their apparel as the shirt itself. Pretty good proof that the duck-call is of some advantage in hunting ducks.

Go out in a blind with one of these old chaps and hear him work on a bunch of mallards. You will be converted right there, but remember it has taken him years to acquire this degree of skill. You can't take his call and do the same thing. The chances are you have seen and heard an expert. Blindfold him and let a duck or ducks fly by, and the chances are he can tell you the species by the sound of their wings.

There are days when ducks won't decoy; likewise there are days when a call is useless. The day when a call works best is the ordinary duck day when all ducks want to decoy but are a little too wise to plump right in.

I have been learning to blow a call all my life and I am still learning. At times I fully decide that I know all there is to know; that I am fully as competent as a ten-year-old mallard hen; then I strike one of these days when the first quack of a call will send them towering and I switch to the other side, vowing all calls are worse than useless. Again I get down in a blind with some old market shooter and



WHITE-WINGED SCOTER.
 $\frac{3}{5}$ Life-size.

sit there with mouth wide open, wondering if in reality this man isn't part duck.

To be a good caller it is almost necessary to be able to name your species as soon as you clap eyes on them; at least you must know what they are before they are in speaking distance. And besides you must know what they say. You must know when to give the flocking call and when the feed call. Doesn't sound easy, does it? Well, it isn't.

I have found that the most essential thing is not to stop calling as soon as you see they are coming in, but keep it up; keep them guessing; don't give them time to think.

When you are in doubt about your birds, talk mallard to most any of them and it will generally work.

The quack—quack—quack has erroneously been called the mallard alarm call, but not so. Rather, it is more of a sentinel call that "All's well." All of us that have startled an old mallard hen out of the reeds and seen her bounce up squawking, every call louder than the one before, should know what the real alarm is. I have seen mallards floating in the current of the Missouri River all day long with no one bothering them and keeping up an incessant quack—quack—quack. If you hope to interest them from a bar blind, you must start in with this same line of talk.

The feeding call of the redhead is similar to the meow of a cat, while the bluebill call is a cross between the caw of a crow and the quack of a duck. All species of deep-water duck can be swum into the decoys with the bluebill k-u-u-u-t (let your tongue vibrate and say this and you can do pretty well without a call). Give them this call and when they either answer you or start swimming, repeat it every five to ten seconds. Often they will swim part of the way and raise and come in on the wing.—*Outing*.

The White-Winged Scoter.

The scoters or coots, of which there are three species, form the principal object of sport along the entire New England coast; the other and more valuable species of the so-called fresh-water ducks have now reached a point where they are but little hunted, owing to scarcity and the drastic measures adopted by the Federal authorities under which they may be taken.

Early in September the female surf scoter appears along the entire coast line of Massachusetts, the flight continuing about fourteen days; then the male follows; next a flight of the female American scoters, followed by the male; then last the female white-winged scoter and the male. During migration much depends upon weather conditions regarding a large flight of these birds along the shores of northern Massachusetts. Oftentimes the main flight is over by the last of September, especially that of the most numerous specie, the surf scoter.

All Winter the scoters congregate on the shoals south of Cape Cod, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard in greater numbers than anywhere else along the Atlantic Coast. There they find food and shelter abundant. The cape, with its natural feeding ground and acres and acres of marsh land also attracts thousands of the other ducks.

With the first severe weather of the Winter the broad-bills, sheldrakes, whistlers and the red-legged black duck are then driven from the inland waters to the coast in search of food and fresh water.

The white-winged scoter also frequents the Pacific Coast, especially the coasts of Oregon and Washington.

The Pleasures of Wild-Fowling.

“We’ve heard the songs of many streams,
In days that are now gone by.”

BY EDMUND W. WEIS, M. D.

Can any scientist, biologist or philosopher explain the feeling of anticipating rapture to a man when he hears or sees something that suggests the possibility of hunting?

Many have tried but I have never found a satisfactory explanation. Whether it is a relic of Barbarian ancestors to want to kill something, or of atavistic tendency of getting food, or the desire to circumvent the wary, or possibly to exercise an acquired skill with the gun, I do not know; but it must be something imperative that will cause a man to give up the comforts of home, brave possible dangers of sickness by exposure to inclement weather, to brave dangers of accidental mutilation and death. It will do all this and yet in spite of the most he can do, the net results may be—as they frequently are—*nil*. And yet he has had such an uplift of spirit, such ecstatic pleasure, that all other means of sport dwindle to the vanishing point. Far be it from me to attempt a reason, for as a matter of fact I have done all and more of these things. It is impossible for me to say just what motive possesses me. This, however, I do know, and that is when the season comes on there is an indescribable longing for a certain something that will only be satisfied by fondling my gun and examining the ammunition box. Then come the days of desire and the nights of

dreaming. Has there ever been a duck hunter who has not filled his bag, has made the most beautiful and almost impossible shots, has gloated over the fall of birds as they hovered over the decoys or swung past him on swift wing, who has not had almost as much pleasure in anticipation as realization? I sincerely believe the half hour before falling asleep has been of greater anticipated joy than the greatest bag ever attained. And then the night after, when tired out and worn to a frazzle by freeze and wet, when the muscles ache from rowing and walking in the swamps, stomach well filled and happy you stretch your body on the downy, how there passes in review the incidents of the day, the missed shot, the accident that caused the loss of the grand old greenhead, the folding up of graceful wings, the splash of the fall, the chase of the cripple and the satisfaction of a clean kill at 40 yards; all of these are gone over and over until the keeper yells, "All up for breakfast."

In my humble estimation, and it is not so humble either, being based on forty-five years' experience behind the gun, there is no sport to equal hunting the duck. Nor is there a greater paradise on earth anywhere to exercise this sport, than the old Illinois and its contributary waters. My experience extends to the Far West, North and South, but nowhere has the satisfaction been as great as just here where when the bag was full my friends enjoyed my joy and participated because they had the misfortune to stay at home.

I started out to write up a duck hunt; how can I, when all my hunts have been as one. Whether when as a kid unable to hold out straight the double barrel, I could bring some down by resting the same on the willows; from the first bird killed on the wing to the bag of the limit of green-

heads only, it is just one kaleidoscope of hunt, of the days when we killed a hundred a day to those of just two or three, it has just been one grand time of solid enjoyment, selfish perhaps if you please, but pleasure exquisite nevertheless.

"Mark north!" Without moving a muscle excepting those of your eyes you follow the flight of a "bunch." The voice of the cedar call, now followed by the live hens out in front, you warily attempt to twist your neck around as they circle, one, two or three times and then the supremest joy when they finally set their wings and float down, as it were, their yellow legs outstretched, down, down to just over the decoys, you rise up, slip your safety and—how you fondle him, admire the wet feathers, pat his plump breast, admire the beautiful colors! The cup of happiness is flowing over. The anticipated is realized, coupled perhaps with a slight regret, that he can never give you that exquisite moment again.

Wherein lies greater satisfaction than a beautiful double—perhaps you are in the blind in the midst of a snow-storm, the peak of your cap is pulled down so that you cannot see well, or some day when the flight has been poor you are slightly dozing, you open your eyes and peer through the meshes in the blind, you see a pair of strange birds swimming just on the outer edge of the decoys. Involuntarily you stiffen, your hand begins to reach over toward the stock of your Remington, and as you rise the pair head for the sky. They are 35 or 40-45 yards away, perhaps 50—crack, crack—and you start and stare as if some one had presented you with a fine jewel.

Again you are careless in your observation when suddenly like a streak there passes some teal. Without an instant's hesitation, it is but one moment to raise the gun, slip the safety, put it against your shoulder, throw the muzzle from 3 to 8 feet ahead, press the trigger and they are yours.

Again, and I will never forget this experience, a pair of mallards came in. I made a clean kill with the first barrel and missed with the second; the drake began to climb straight into the sky immediately over the blind, I slipped in the shell, raised the gun, struck a rotten limb above me, loosened a lot of punk-wood which filled my eyes, rubbed them clear and then sighted on him away up in the blue, when at the crack of the gun he "let go all hold" and came tumbling down not 20 yards away.

Then again the sudden change from deep disappointment to gratification; you have fired both barrels into a bunch of small birds that had not any intention of stopping with you, they go sailing on and while you are wondering how it was possible to have missed, a number fall out and you retrieve some beauties.

There is no grander passion from which one can realize so large a per cent. of absolute pleasure, recreation and pride of achievement as from that of duck hunting. And after the season is over, you have put gun and paraphernalia away you settle down to business, take it from me, you will be a better man, more energetic in your work and do better in every way from having had a good play. For what is sport but—to play—"to practice field diversion." Every one in active business life should play at something if they desire to reach a happy, vigorous old age.

Duck Shooting on the New England Sea Coast.

When the Wawa has departed,
When the wild goose has gone southward.

—Longfellow.

I have enjoyed making a study of the ducks that come in the migratory flight to Massachusetts. This has meant many a watching with hunters in the duck-stands on various ponds, chasing the ducks on the ocean, or waiting in a gunning-line for them to come to me.

It is very exciting to watch the approach of a flock to one of these "stands," or "bowers," on the shore of a pond. The flock first fly over and begin to circle around the pond. The live decoys set up their hoarse clamor of invitation. At length they splash down out in the middle of the pond near the "blocks" or wooden decoys. Looking cautiously about, they get their bearings, and begin to listen to the decoys. They do not always yield to the treachery, but when they once are deceived they swim in a body at a rapid rate right for the stand. Suddenly the guns, pointed through loopholes, blaze out at a concerted signal and there is meat for the hunters' table. A great many are thus taken in the ponds of southeastern Massachusetts and elsewhere. The best season is throughout October, especially about the middle, after a storm, when a cold northwest gale starts up. How they will fly, flock after flock, not only in early morning and late afternoon, as at ordinary times, but all day.

Late in October the stands make ready for the Canada geese, some of them keeping large flocks of tame geese, bred from wild stock, for decoys.—*Herbert K. Job.*

The Pintail.

The pintail is to me a most interesting bird, always seeming to want to get away for the far North in the Spring. There are few more beautiful ducks than the pintail. Its long and pointed wings, narrow body, and long neck and tail, and its swiftness in flight, make it a handsome bird.

The pintail is the first duck always to arrive from the South in the Spring and they push on north regardless of snow-storms and cold winds and are always thin in flesh at this season on account of flying so much. In the Fall they do not seem to be so plentiful, but in the Spring they are often seen in large flocks. They are very wary, and the hunter rarely gets a shot at a flock of any size. They seem to be constantly on the alert. The male bird is very handsome, with his beautiful rich brown head and neck striped with white. They have been seen inside the Polar Circle and usually nest in the far North, although nesting somewhat in the Dakotas, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

The flight of the pintail is very erratic, darting about considerable and generally remaining well up in the air and bearing in a northerly direction in the Spring.

The pintail associates considerably with the mallard, and mounted specimens of hybrids may be seen at the Field Museum, Jackson Park, and the Academy of Sciences, Lincoln Park, Chicago. Both pintails and mallards are fond of frequenting little ponds in the cornfields in the Spring and also are often found on the prairies where cattle are being fattened for the market by being fed corn, the birds picking up the scattered kernels wasted by the cattle.



PIN-TAIL DUCK.
 $\frac{1}{3}$ Life-size.

A Duck Hunt On the Kankakee.

“These were the best days of my life; these were my golden days.”—*The Trail of the Sand-Hill Stag.*

Although I have fought the waves on many a stormy day, and have been out in many severe storms on various occasions, one hunt in particular on the Kankakee lingers in my memory.

My brother Henry and myself left our home, Morris, Illinois, located on the Illinois River, early in December, our camping destination being on the Kankakee Islands, a group of heavily wooded islands in the Kankakee River about one mile above its confluence with the Des Plaines. We had two 16-foot galvanized-iron boats, forty decoys, plenty of ammunition, tent, blankets, and camp-stove for cooking on and to heat our tent. Also a small hand-saw, for there is nothing so useful in preparing stove-wood.

Some of the other hunters warned us that it was pretty late in the season to go camping, but we thought we should perhaps be able to return before the river should freeze up for the winter. The weather up to this time had been comparatively mild.

The first day we rowed ten miles up the Illinois to the junction of the Des Plaines and Kankakee Rivers, and then entering the Kankakee River, reached the islands where we were to camp in the middle of the afternoon. We were something over eleven miles from Morris. We did not hunt any that day, being content in making our camp comfortable and laying in a supply of wood, of which there was

plenty at hand. The Kankakee here flows through a prairie country and there was no timber except on the islands. The river here runs directly north, and to the west of us for four or five miles was a vast prairie. About one mile from us in this prairie was located Goose Lake, a large lake surrounded by many smaller ponds, a famous resort of the wild-fowl. Ducks crossed back and forth from the Kankakee and also from the Des Plaines to this lake in vast flocks at night to feed, and returned to the rivers in the morning, and I have been camping on the Des Plaines when the roar of their wings could be heard a quarter of a mile, as flock after flock came down the Des Plaines from Joliet Lake to cross over to the Kankakee and then to Goose Lake to spend the night. I greatly admire the wild ducks' powers of flight. They certainly "Go some ever they die," in the words of the Canadian lumber-jack, and when they put on the high speed, well, good-night! If you can stop a single green-wing teal coming down the wind, you are then qualified to be called a marksman.

We decided to remain on the river at the islands as it might freeze up suddenly at any time.

The next morning was cloudy and a slight wind blowing, but there seemed something ominous in the air, as though a storm were impending. My brother set out one-half of our wooden decoys (about twenty) at the extreme lower point of the largest island, and I set out the other a short distance above him between the two largest islands.

There did not seem to be many ducks on the wing until, early in the afternoon, the wind increased very strongly and it began to snow and blow a gale from the northwest. In fact, it was the beginning of a blizzard.

"The wind comes gently at the Break of day."



One of the Many Beautiful Islands on the Kankakee River.

Photo by W. M. Lyon, Chicago.

By 3 o'clock large flocks of mallards would come over the great oak trees on the island, hurried along by the wind and falling snow, and as they would catch sight of my decoys in the sheltered place between the islands, would close their wings nearly to their bodies and literally coast down the air with a rush over my decoys. They seemed to sense that this was no ordinary storm. Had they not been already driven from Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia in September by ice and cold; from Minnesota and Wisconsin to Illinois and Iowa in October and November, and now this meant to them a flight to Reelfoot Lake in Tennessee or the bayous of the Mississippi over night!

There would be the sound of whizzing, rushing wings, a puff of smoke, a dull boom of the gun and a fat mallard would drop; another puff of smoke, another boom, and another would drop.

By 4 o'clock, when I had shot about twenty mallards, I had great difficulty in getting back to the island each time I would go out to retrieve my birds, as the soft snow was floating down the river and gradually becoming coated with a crust of ice on top, every few minutes would carry some of my decoys away. Those nearest to shore were in a little eddy and were not affected by the ice so much.

After a few parting shots, for I knew I would get no more opportunities until the following Spring, and as it was fast becoming dark, about 4:30 I decided to return to our camp, and after taking up the few decoys still on the water, I rowed my boat to shore and turned it over on the bank with the decoys under it. I had twenty-six fine mallards.

My brother had returned to camp before me with about twenty mallards and after making things snug in the tent, we were about to retire.

Just then a spark from our stove caught fire to our tent, but we extinguished it before it had burned the tent very much and patched the hole up with a flour sack.

The next morning was clear and cold, with the thermometer well below zero.

We started to walk across the island when my brother looked at me and said: "Your ears are white. They are frozen!" "Yours are too!" I told him, as soon as I glanced at him. We rubbed them briskly to take the frost out.

What a change in the appearance of the river from the day previous! Where we had rowed our boats the day before there was now a solid sheet of ice that would bear our weight. There were no ducks in sight. They had left for a warmer climate and where they could find open water and were probably hundreds of miles away.

We busied ourselves during the day in making a couple of sleds strong enough to hold our boats and outfit, as we knew that was the only way we could get home, as the river was surely frozen over for the season.

The following morning we loaded the boats on the sleds and started on our homeward journey. After going a half mile we saw there was a narrow strip of water in the center of the river which was not frozen, as the current was swift here for several miles. So this time we loaded the sleds into the boats and thought we would take a chance on getting out at the lower end of the open water, how far down the river it was we did not know. We went about three miles and found it extended no further and pulled our boats out on the ice again and resumed our journey. We had visions of La Salle and his men crossing to the Illinois from Lake Michigan in the dead of winter and descending the Illinois to Peoria on the ice with their canoes on sledges.

When we reached Twin Island, eight miles from Morris, we saw we would be unable to reach Morris with our entire equipment that day and so we left our boats turned over on the river bank with the decoys underneath them to return for them later. While we were arranging the boats a flock of prairie chickens flew over our heads in the straggling manner peculiar to them, and as a result of four shots fired at them, three prairie chickens fell. One miss!

We finally reached home with our guns and game about dusk, well pleased with our trip, even though our ears were frozen!



What a joy to the hunter to feel a pair of gun barrels in his hands, or do you use an automatic or pump?

Duck hunting numbers more devotees than any other branch of hunting small game, and no one with red blood can resist its lure once it has been experienced.

The hunter is seated in his blind and two distant reports of a shot-gun come floating down the wind to his ears, and nearly a mile away he sees a flock of black objects that resemble a swarm of bees headed toward him. They become larger and larger, weaving in and out and constantly shifting their positions in the flock. Soon he hears the roar of their wings as it drives their whizzing bodies through the air. Some speed there, boy! They see the decoys, begin to lower their flight, make several graceful circles, slacken up a trifle, there are two streams of fire pour from the muzzle of his gun, and a pair of birds fall one after the other, as though thrown from a catapult.

The Woodcock.

While a boy many times I unexpectedly came upon a woodcock while roaming the woods and along the borders of rivers and streams. The woodcock is a most interesting and curious bird, and when I would flush one from under the willows near some favorite feeding place or resort of the bird, in a few days I would happen around to the same locality again to see if the bird was still frequenting his old haunt. Almost invariably the bird would be flushed from nearly the same spot. Sometimes it would not be far from human habitation. In later years I spent considerable time hunting woodcock and became well acquainted with their many peculiarities and strange habits.

The peculiar whistle of the woodcock's wings as he flushes is a little different from that of any other game bird, and once heard is not soon forgotten. Sometimes a woodcock will be flushed in the Fall from an orchard or from the side of a hill in the timber where there is not much underbrush, but probably a little creek not far distant.

The woodcock feeds largely at night and often the hunter will see one flit by like a shadow on his way to some feeding place. His flight at such times is very silent and almost ghostly.

While eccentric in flight when flushed, the bird does not usually go but a short distance, darting down into the cover.

Old Jack, my star duck dog, was the best dog for woodcock hunting I have ever seen. If there were any birds in the locality, he would soon find them, no matter how dense the cover.

AMERICAN WOODCOCK,
 $\frac{3}{4}$ Life-size.



Reminiscences of the Chesapeake Bay Dog.

In that delightful land which is washed by the Delaware's flow.—*Longfellow.*

BY GEORGE L. HOPPER.

Of all the Chesapeake Bay retrievers, or any other kind of retrievers, it has been my pleasure to shoot over, Old Bob of Spesutia Island stands out, in my personal recollections, the peer of them all. He was a most perfect specimen of the rough or curly-coated dog. His outer coat was curled and twisted as close and as tight as the wool on a Guinea nigger's head. It felt to the hand like the wool of a Merino sheep; in color like the sands on the shore. And he weighed about eighty pounds.

Old Bob was raised and owned by Colonel Ned Mitchell, one of God's noblemen, standing six feet seven inches in his stocking feet, a big man in every way the term may be applied; hospitable, kind and indulgent to a fault towards any boy coming to the island for a day's outing, fishing, crabbing and to shoot ducks and snipe. He could mix a mint julep which would make you virtuous and happy and teach you to speak the truth, especially when describing the largest fish which always gets away. Woodcock and quail could be found in goodly numbers, too, during their respective seasons.

"Can Bob go with us, Mr. Mitchell?" was always the first demand upon the Colonel's hospitality.

"Why, certainly, take Bob along with you, boys! You can't get your ducks without Bob."

Old Bob would give you a very friendly recognition at the sight of the gun on your shoulder. But you might coax until you were blue in the face, not a step would he go beyond that gate, to which he had accompanied you as gallantly as the Colonel himself always did, upon your departure for home, after a pleasant and successful outing at the Middle Island Farm. Bob would sit by the gate, and if you attempted to tie a rope about his neck he would let you know by unmistakable signs that he would regard it as a personal insult and treat you accordingly. The only thing you could do was to inform the Colonel that Bob refused to go. What a pleased look would encompass that big, kindly and honest old face when you informed him that Bob refused to go with you. The Colonel would then come out on the porch and laughingly call out:

"Bob, come here a minute! Why don't you go along down to the shore with the boys and help them to get some ducks?"

The Colonel's request was sufficient. Out the gate Old Bob would bound, as much pleased as we were, and would stay with us from daybreak to dark. I have seen him on such occasions follow a crippled duck so far into that bay it became difficult to distinguish which was the dog's head and which the duck, as they arose and disappeared from the rolling waves. We would become alarmed, fearing he might become exhausted by following the duck such a great distance, then we would fire our gun, a signal he never failed to answer promptly by returning ashore.

OLD BOB BRINGS HOME SOME DUCKS.

The gunning days upon the flats or feeding grounds of the upper Chesapeake are Mondays, Wednesdays and Sat-

urdays. Other days of the week, according to the local laws, they are allowed to feed unmolested. A good, stiff northerly breeze upon gunning days would drift most all the dead and crippled ducks not picked up by the lookout boats which attend the sink boxes upon the shore of Spesutia Island. No one knew this better than Bob. He would be up and doing by daylight the next morning, diligently hunting, and would find every dead and crippled duck, then tote them, two and three at a time, to the house, invariably placing them at the kitchen door. I distinctly recall the old cook rushing to the dining room door one Sunday morning, exclaiming in a very excited manner:

"Befo' God, Miss Susie, if Bob ain't gone done and bringed home another passel of dem ducks!"

We all rushed out to see, and sure enough, there were a dozen or more canvasbacks, redheads and blackheads.

A CONTRAST BETWEEN THE PAST AND PRESENT.

It is one of my most pleasing pastimes, when harking back over this trail of life, to draw a comical contrast between the up-to-date hunting outfit which we all possess nowadays and that in general use when we were boys; also the amount of game to the number of shots fired and the cost of ammunition expended, etc. We now have double-barreled automatic ejectors, to say nothing of the death-dealing pump and automatic shotguns, containing ammunition costing, on the average, for duck-loaded shells, 3.28 cents each. In our boyhood days I sallied forth, in company with a little nigger and Old Bob, armed with a single-barreled shotgun longer than myself, equipped with a hickory ramrod, a wad of newspaper for wadding, a quarter of

a pound of black powder, a pound of shot and a box of G. D. caps. And when the waterproof cap came in vogue the uttermost limit of perfection, we thought, had been reached with the fowling-piece.

TOLLING DUCKS ON CHESAPEAKE BAY.

At tolling Old Bob was unexcelled. We would saunter along the shore of the island until we located a raft of ducks within a half mile of shore. Then if conditions were favorable we would hide behind an old log or a pile of driftwood, as nearly opposite the ducks as possible. Bob was then coaxed into the hiding place and a red bandana, borrowed from old Aunt Melissa for the occasion, was made fast about midship of Bob's tail. When the bandana was made fast and secure, cut would bound Old Bob, delighted to begin tolling. He would begin about fifty yards above or below us, running belly deep in the surf, barking at the top of his voice, then turn at about fifty yards, keeping up the performance until the ducks' attention was attracted. As the ducks swam in towards the shore Bob worked back upon the shore until he was to our rear some ten or fifteen yards, always on the bounce and barking as loud as he could. I have seen the ducks come in to the very edge of the surf; then, with a steady rest and an aim that never failed, we would knock over five or six at a shot, sometimes more. At the crack of the gun Old Bob would rush into the water and grab the cripples. It mattered not how many you knocked over, the cripples received his first attention. We would gather up the ducks as Bob brought them to us and then move on until we located another raft of ducks at a favorable distance from shore. Thus we would continue until we became so tired and hungry we



CINNAMON TEAL.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ Life-size.

would have tried to eat a duck fried in coal tar. With the gun stock strained almost to the breaking point by the weight of the ducks, we would homeward plod our weary way, hungry and tired, but oh! how proud and happy. Would that such happiness could always be continued until we pass over the Great Divide into the Happy Hunting Grounds.—*The American Field.*



The Nesting Season of Wild Ducks.

Nature is the kindest mother still.—*Byron.*

I spent two seasons in North Dakota observing the nesting of wild ducks. While there is no exact time at which each species lays—for individuals are very erratic—there is an average date at which one can expect to find the bulk of a species thus employed.

During a week's time spent among the large sloughs of North Dakota, from June 7 to 14, I found a considerable number of nests of the canvasback, redhead and ruddy ducks, built out in the reeds over water averaging knee deep, all of which made a very interesting study. The ruddy ducks were only just laying and had anywhere from one to ten eggs. The redhead is a great layer. Some days I found half a dozen nests, most of which had as many as ten eggs, several times as many as fifteen, and once I flushed a redhead from a nest of twenty-two eggs—the largest set that I have ever seen in the nest of any bird. The canvasback usually had ten or eleven eggs, sometimes as few as seven. One nest that I found was in a very

large, open clump, away out in the water. Mrs. Canvasback was asleep on the nest, with her bill resting on her breast. I stood within ten yards of her, and watched her for several minutes. Think of it! The famous canvasback of the epicure at home in the northern wilds, out on the lake, asleep in her ark—what a scene it was!

The little calendar I give I would not set up against the observations of others; it is simply the average of two seasons' continuous observation. Mallards and pintails are notably the early birds, laying any time after the first of May—occasionally before, I am told—though I think that about May 20 one will find the greatest number of nests. By this time, in ordinary seasons, the canvasbacks have laid and the hooded mergansers. May 25 is about the right date for goldeneyes; June 1 for teal, shovellers, and red-heads; June 10 or later for gadwalls and ruddies; June 15 and on for the scaups and baldpates, and the 1st of July for the white-winged scoter.—*Herbert K. Job.*



“Listen! Here comes another bunch.” We both began scanning the heavens. High up and towards the north was a bunch of specks that were growing larger and larger as they roared down. Nothing so much did this roar resemble as a distant aeroplane high overhead. On down the lake they whirred, and back straight over the blind. The roar from their wings seemed equal in volume to that of an express train. Down the lake they went, and back over the decoys. As they swept past us we picked four white-backed drakes from the rear guard.—*R. P. Holland.*

Battery Shooting On Great South Bay, Long Island.

It is far from being easy work to kill in the battery. The water and the sky-line, the immense open space and the clear atmosphere, tend to deceive you in the matter of distance. The ducks appear to be fully as near you as they really are, and a tyro at the play would certainly shoot prematurely.

Again about battery shooting—the trick the birds have of getting right into the decoys without your seeing their approach. Of course, many come from behind you, and the rule of lying flat on your back prevents you from keeping a lookout in this direction, but the number of bunches, large flocks, pairs, and single birds that come from the very direction your face is turned to and fly right in front of your gun muzzles before you discover them is astounding. And these are the birds most often missed.

* * * * *

The scene was a charming one to both the tyro and the experienced man. Far to the eastern point of the bay, riding quietly on the shallow water's surface, like an immense raft of small wood, the eye could plainly discern a great body of duck. Brant, broadbill, black duck, redhead, sprig-tail, old squaw, "coot" (scoter), and sheldrake all wheeled by in small platoons, some skimming over the decoys, others far out beyond the head of the stool.

Five couples and a half of beautiful black duck, their ruddy features glistening in the early sunshine, skimmed into the very center of the flock of imitation fowl, set their wings fully outstretched, lowered their feet, and dipped into the salty bay with the graceful ease of a brood of swans putting out into some mansion pond.—*The Wildfowlers.*

A Morning's Sport at Clayton Lake, Minnesota.

The autumn day is flecked with gold,
And wild-fowl hover down the dusky air.

—Isaac McLellan.

BY H. A. STAHN.

We have some splendid duck shooting in Minnesota and for many years this has been my favorite recreation.

There is a chain of lakes in southern Minnesota and at one of them, Clayton Lake, fourteen miles from Fairmont, myself and a few companions have a cabin, and we enjoy a few days' shooting each season at this point.

After reaching the lake at evening preparatory to a day's shooting on the morrow, with what pleasure does one arrange all the details that nothing may be missing to contribute to the following day's sport.

You note the direction of the wind, condition of the weather, etc., not forgetting of course to keep a sharp lookout for flocks of ducks flying from one lake to the other and noting the course of their flight, and then finally, after retiring and finally inducing yourself to sleep a little, somewhat feverishly, to be sure, with the anticipated sport to come, how it thrills one to be awakened in the night and hear the "quack!" "quack!" of ducks on every side!

Our cabin is located on a point on Clayton Lake, nearly surrounded by water, in a bunch of timber, which makes the cabin nearly invisible from any part of the lake. We can literally see and not be seen.



"Forty-five canvasbacks and mallards after a morning's shooting."

Courtesy of H. A. Stahn, Fairmont, Minn.

My banner morning's sport occurred several years ago before the present Minnesota bag limit was in force.

Myself and partner set out for our morning hunt with 125 shells each. It was a clear, still day in October. There was no wind blowing and we decided to locate near the center of the lake where the ducks were flying across.

This lake covers an area of perhaps 700 to 800 acres, with tall rushes extending about 300 yards from shore. We set out our decoys near a large bunch of rushes not far from the center of the lake. We had an outer bunch of six or eight decoys some distance out and a larger number near the rushes, where our boat was partially concealed. The outer bunch of decoys were a fine attraction. The birds would swoop down to them and at the same time they would see the decoys near the rushes, which would coax them down our way. We could not use live decoys on account of the deep water.

The flight of ducks that came over us that morning the reader can hardly realize and we wasted more ammunition than usual in shooting at long range on account of the quietness of the morning and the consequent higher flight of the birds.

This was one of the grandest morning's sport I ever had in all my hunting career, and when my partner and myself counted up our birds before returning to our cabin at about 11 o'clock, we found we had 46 fine birds, nearly all canvasbacks and mallards.

On account of the bag limit, we shall never be able to equal this again.

The Tree Ducks of South America, Mexico and Texas.

There are several species of tree ducks and the one illustrated in this book is the fulvous duck, sometimes called the long-legged duck in Texas. It is also found in Louisiana and the other semi-tropical States bordering the Gulf of Mexico, and central and southern California, and also frequenting Washoe Lake, Nevada.

These ducks seem to be intermediate between the true geese and ducks. They alight on the branches of trees near a stream or lake, and walk about on them as if much at home. In fact, they are generally said to pass most of their daylight hours in the branches of trees, and to do most of their feeding and make their flights at night.

The flesh of the different tree ducks is said to be most delicious.

The tree ducks all have much longer legs than ordinary wild ducks, so they are enabled to wade very readily in shallow water and feed.

They are said by various authorities not to frequent salt water, but their habitat is fresh-water lakes and sloughs, where they feed on the grasses that grow there, and also visiting the corn-fields at night in search of grain.

The bird is an excellent diver, and on account of their long legs are able to run very fast when on shore.

Theodore Roosevelt mentions seeing different varieties of tree ducks on his recent Brazilian trip.

Excellent specimens of the tree duck may be seen in the aviary at Lincoln Park, Chicago.

The fulvous duck is slightly larger than a mallard.



The Tale of a Swan.

And these bring pictures to my dreaming eyes,
Of river, woodland, marsh, and stubblefield.

—*Ernest McGaffey.*

A party of us duck-hunters were encamped on a timbered island at the west end of Goose Lake, a famous ducking ground, and were spending several weeks there during the Fall duck-shooting season.

This lake was a half mile from the Kankakee River, but there was no way of getting a boat into the lake except by making a portage across the intervening land from the Kankakee River. As the adjoining land-owners had many cattle, they did not look with favor on hunters crossing the land to the lake, and so we usually made the journey in the night time, as we were scrupulous about frightening the cattle. We had one boat in the lake permanently and another on the river, as we went to the nearest town about twice a week with our game and returned with ammunition, provisions, etc.

The main sheet of water at Goose Lake was about three-quarters of a mile long and perhaps a quarter of a mile in width. At the west end of the lake were smaller ponds for several miles surrounded by a great prairie. The ducks would feed in the smaller ponds mostly mornings and evenings, flying back and forth from the open water of the lake.

During midday there was a lull in the flight and sometimes I would spend a few hours rowing along the shores of the lake and getting a few shots at stray birds and also occasionally stirring up the main body of birds on the lake,

causing them to fly around so that the other hunters of our party who were stationed at the smaller ponds with their decoys would get some shooting.

One day an enormous solitary swan settled himself at one end of the lake, not within gunshot of shore, however, and made himself at home on the waters of the lake. Where he came from was a mystery, but evidently he had dropped in during the night some time and was probably separated from some flock on its migration.

He had an immense stretch of wings^{*}, and with his long neck could be seen at a great distance.

The bird was an excellent judge of the killing distance of a shotgun, for he would remain on the bosom of the lake watching me until I had approached him with the boat almost within range, when he would stretch his great wings and fly to the other end of the lake. He would sometimes fly over the shore when making a circle, but usually was careful enough to keep over the open surface of the lake. However, he would not leave the lake altogether, but he would circle around a few times and then return, encouraging me in the hope that I would finally get a shot at him.

I did not know that there were any other hunters at the main lake, as my companions were at the ponds at the west end of the lake watching their decoys.

Unknown to me, however, there was a hunter ambushed in the deep rushes bordering the lake and had been unseen by either the swan or myself. He was probably very much interested in my chasing the swan from one end of the lake to the other, but was careful to keep out of sight.

After an hour or so of this kind of work I was about to give up the swan chase as something akin to a wild-goose

chase, when behold! the swan made a final circle over the tall rushes at the margin of the lake before returning to open water. Suddenly there was the flash of a gun, a loud report, and the swan fell heavily into the edge of the lake pierced by a load of duck shot. He had attempted to fly over the ambushed hunter's head and it was his finish.

He surely was a monstrous bird and as I retrieved him for the gunner I mentally vowed I would not chase any more swans for a time, at least.



Were you ever afloat in the flooded bottomlands of the big Southern rivers? Come to Louisiana, Mississippi or Arkansas for your real woods cruising—your voyages of exploration. A dozen paddle strokes carry you beyond sight of shore and into new wonder regions—new because the vista changes with each upward foot of the swelling flood. Weeds, switch-cane, bushes, drop out of sight, and the clean, straight trees rise like carved pillars from a marble court, marking open avenues in whatever direction fancy may prompt you to follow. Elsewhere the first of the winter storms bring mud, slush and enforced home-staying; here they mean open sailing in a dry and comfortable boat, through the heart of the wilderness, where at other seasons passage is prohibited. Head freshets follow the waterways, but when the inrush from surcharged rivers sets back into the lowlands the currents may and do shift and change at varying stages of the flood. I love the overflow country.—*Tredway H. Elliott.*

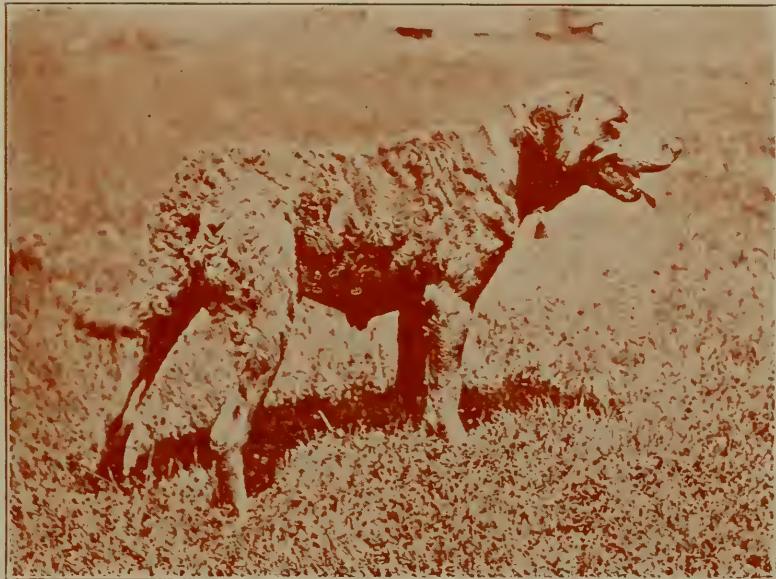
The Chesapeake Bay Dog.

The dog is man's most faithful friend, and is the only animal who will follow him to the ends of the earth.—*Lieut. Robert E. Peary.*

Every man who hunts wild-fowl much ought to have a good retriever. Setters and Irish water spaniels are very commonly used. The best duck dog, in my opinion, is one who combines the best qualities of each breed by crossing. The best duck dog I ever saw was a dog of this description. He was a fine retriever and had a nose as good as any setter. He could be used for duck hunting and was just as valuable for hunting quail, prairie chickens, woodcock or jack snipe. No wounded duck could escape him in the reeds or rushes.

For about one hundred years there have been bred about Chesapeake Bay a breed of dogs called the Chesapeake Bay dog. The history of this breed is partly authentic and partly traditional. It is said that about the year 1805 there arrived at Baltimore a ship called the "Canton," which at sea had met with an English brig bound from Newfoundland to England, in a sinking condition. On this ship were found two puppies, a dog, which was brown in color, and a bitch, black. These puppies were rescued and became the property of a Mr. Law. The dog was named Sailor, and his mate, Canton. The dog passed into the hands of Governor Lloyd, of Maryland, and the bitch became the property of Dr. Stewart, of Sparrows Point. Their progeny became the Chesapeake Bay dogs.

Thanks to a coterie of sportsmen in the Middle and Far West, and particularly in Minnesota and the Dakotas, interest in this great breed of retrievers has not entirely



"A PRIZE-WINNING CHESAPEAKE."

"Edmund's Lusitania."

Courtesy of J. F. Parks, Battle Mountain Kennels, Hot Springs, S. D.

lapsed, and many excellent specimens are still being bred. Among those who had retained an abiding interest in these dogs is J. F. Parks, of Hot Springs, South Dakota. Mr. Parks is entitled to great credit for his efforts to perpetuate a pure strain of Chesapeake Bay dogs. From a recent article by him in *The American Field* I take the following interesting facts:

"The Chesapeake Bay dog has been developed to a very high state of perfection on the shores of Chesapeake Bay and has been used as retrievers by duck hunters in that locality for a great many years.

"In color they range from a deep seal brown down through the varying shades of brown to a very light sedge or 'faded buffalo' color, and in coat from the smooth, wavy, short coat to the heavy, thick coat, resembling very much the sheep pelt. These dogs have what is known as the double or otter coat, the under coat being very thick and furlike, while the other coat is of coarse hair. This difference in color and coat seems to occur in almost every litter of puppies, and just why this is so is a mystery. A small white star is also frequently found on the breast of these dogs, but not always. Some fanciers prefer one shade and some another. Some prefer the short, wavy coat, but my experience warrants me in the conclusion that it matters very little what the shade of coat is, just so you are sure you have the pure breed of dogs, whose pedigree goes back to the two dogs landed in Maryland in the year 1805.

"The thoroughbred Chesapeake is absolutely fearless and was never known to quit under the most trying conditions. Deep mud, tangled rice beds and rushes, as well as extreme cold, has no terrors for them.

"I have seen these dogs break ice over an inch thick for a distance of fifty yards going after a duck and then turn around and break a new channel through the ice, back to me with the duck, and repeat the feat as often as they were called upon to do; in fact, I have yet to see a retrieve so tough but what they would make the attempt at it, and if a physical possibility for them to accomplish it they always returned with the bird.

"In order to be in a position to fully appreciate these dogs, one must come in actual contact with them and enjoy their companionship. They are, without doubt, the wisest dogs in existence, and as companions they are simply in a class by themselves. As a rule they are what is known among sportsmen as 'one-man dogs.' That is, they recognize but one master, and when they are properly trained to retrieve, an owner need not worry about getting his own duck when shooting with others in a marsh or on a river."

Mr. George L. Hopper, of Duckabush, Washington, has the following to say of the Chesapeake Bay dog, also in *The American Field*:

"Anything regarding the Chesapeake Bay dog will prove especially interesting to all the old-time Maryland and Virginia sportsmen who were born and raised upon the banks of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries; from these waters a greater variety of delicious good things can be had, with less effort, than any spot or place upon God's green earth. The most of us can recall the name and personal characteristics of some certain Chesapeake Bay dog which was among our boon companions during our boyhood days, when we frolicked and whiled away the blossom of youth.

"We will all appreciate the personal interest Mr. J. F. Parks, of Hot Springs, South Dakota, has taken in our old-time friend by setting to print 'A Brief Legendary History of the Chesapeake Bay Dog.' Although the exact origin of his ancestors always has been and always will remain clouded with some degree of uncertainty, what Mr. Parks has stated is about all that is to be known of the Chesapeake Bay retriever.

"That the Chesapeake Bay retriever is the greatest of water dogs is undoubtedly owing to the great strength of his forelegs and powerful shoulders, but more especially to that peculiar and unexplainable furlike under coat, through which an oily substance is mixed, like unto the down of a duck, not natural to any other breed of dogs, which enables him to withstand the most rigorous weather during the ducking season. He is more especially appreciated by us old-time fellows for his knowledge of the art of tolling the ducks within gunshot, and they take to tolling as naturally as the setter does to pointing quail. No fox can be more skillful and cunning.

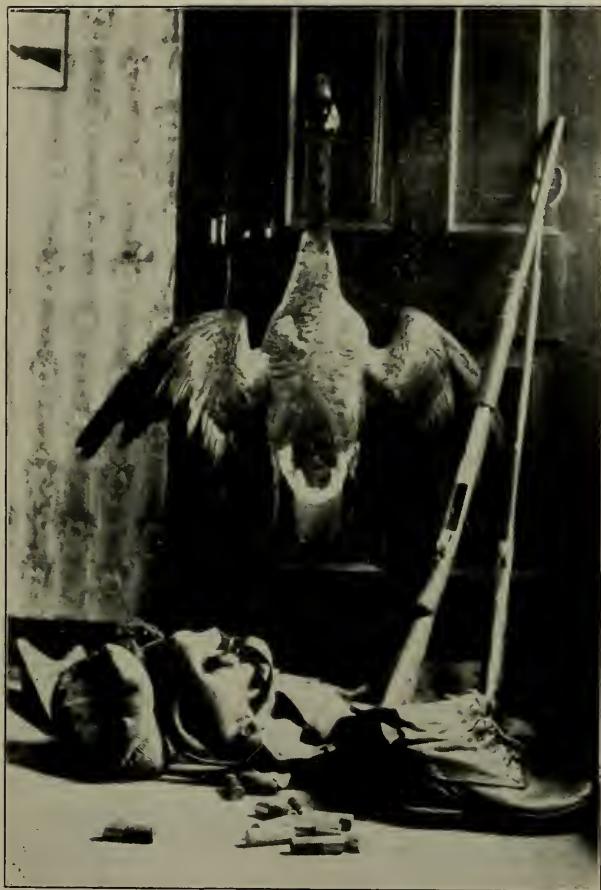
"In disposition the Chesapeakes are most extraordinary. They are very quiet and they do not like to be disturbed, while watching over a stool of decoys, but other dogs and people not connected with the sport at hand. Some may think them sullen on that account, but they are never vicious or quarrelsome, either with dogs or people. They simply want to be let alone. To them life begins and life ends retrieving and tolling for ducks. Their minds are never connected with other things.

"The smooth, wavy, short-coated dogs are the most desired by some, because they can more thoroughly shake off the water and dry out more quickly. The smooth and curly-coated Chesapeake Bay retrievers are not distinct strains, as many suppose; they are both whelped from the same litter, the color ranging from a seal brown to a light sedge, as stated by Mr. Parks more fully.

"During freezing weather the icicles do not form on the outer coat of the smooth-coated dog, as they do on the rough or curly-coated. But it seems to make no difference to 'Old Curly.' He may tremble with excitement when the ducks are about to dart to the decoys, but he never shivers and suffers from the cold wind and icicles sticking to his coat. And I cannot recall at this writing of having ever seen a Chesapeake Bay retriever afflicted with canker of the ear, with which other dogs will surely become afflicted if permitted to retrieve from the water any great length of time."

I quote the following from the pen of Mr. A. F. Hochwalt, one of the greatest authorities on the dog in this country, who, in his very excellent work called "Dogcraft," has this to say of the Chesapeake Bay dog:

"As a retriever of dead and wounded ducks, there is no dog that equals the Chesapeake. His great strength of limb, his unlimited powers of endurance, and his dense coat, fit him eminently for braving the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, which is quite frequently covered with floating ice, when much of the duck shooting is done. The Chesapeake Bay dog has been known to swim for miles in a rough sea, covered with broken ice, after a wounded duck, a feat which few dogs would be able to equal."



"My First Goose." Courtesy of Clyde B. Terrell, Oshkosh, Wis.

Senachwine Lake in the Last Days of the Old Muzzleloader.

The green trees whispered low and mild,
And freshness breathed from every spring.

—Longfellow.

A description of the water-fowl at Senachwine Lake as it was thirty-five years ago, by T. S. Van Dyke:

It was a bright September afternoon and as we reached Senachwine huge flocks of mallards rose with reverberating wings from the borders of the lake all around us and mounted high, with the sun brightly glancing from every plume. Plainly could I see the sheen of their burnished necks, the glistening bars upon their wings, the band of white upon their tails, surmounted by dainty curls of shining green.

Never did Nature make a finer background for such a display as appeared when twilight sank over the earth.

Long lines of wild-fowl came streaming down from the northern sky, widening out and descending in long lines or long, sweeping curves. Dense bunches came rising out of the horizon, hanging for a moment on the glowing sky, then massing and bearing directly down upon us.

No longer as single spies, but in battalions, they poured over the bluffs on the west, where the land sweeps into the vast expanse of high prairie, and on wings swifter than the wind itself came riding down the last beams of the sinking sun. Above them the air was dotted with long, wedge-shaped masses or converging strings, more slowly moving than the ducks, from which I could soon hear the deep, mellow honk of the goose and the clamorous cackle of the brant.

The Old-Time Market Hunter.

When twilight on the rushes falls.—*poems of Gun and Rod.*

The markets for selling wild game now being closed generally throughout most of the States, the old-time duck hunter who shot for the market has now become a guide or "pusher" for the wealthier sportsmen, chiefly from the large cities. Like Othello, his former occupation is gone.

At all points where there have been good duck shooting in this country, there have been men who have followed duck hunting for a livelihood. Naturally, as they were on the marshes and lakes of the ducking grounds each day and were constantly studying everything pertaining to wild-fowling, they came to possess greater knowledge than the ordinary hunter, whether from the cities or country, who only went duck hunting occasionally. Constant practice in shooting made them expert marksmen in most cases, and a number of America's most expert trap shots have been developed from market hunters.

There has sometimes been a feeling not entirely of friendliness between the market hunter towards the wealthy man from the city who has come for a few days' or a week's shooting in the favorite resort of the local hunter. I have seen several illustrations of this. One man, the founder of a great business in Chicago, used to go hunting (he owned a gun costing \$750, which he never fired), and would hire six or eight men to go out and do the shooting, paying them well, then return to Chicago with his game and distribute it among his friends. They thought he was a mighty hunter, no doubt. To my personal knowledge he was unable to hit

a duck on the wing. Of course there are many fine sportsmen among the hunters from the great cities, however.

One Spring I had been on a hunting trip down the Illinois River and on my way back up the river my pardner and myself shot for a couple of weeks near the quaint little town of Chillicothe.

We were camped about two miles from Chillicothe and would take turns going down to the town evenings for provisions, mail, etc.

One of the best shots on the river was John L——a most quiet and unassuming fellow who lived near Chillicothe. Most of the time he shot for the market, but sometimes would go out as a guide or pusher for some of the visiting hunters from the cities.

Evenings the hunters and villagers would congregate in one of the few stores in the town, a grocery and general store, and tell stories, play checkers, etc.

One evening I stopped in the store for a short time before returning to our camp up the river. While I was in there a wealthy man from one of the large cities who was there for a few days' shooting, came into the store.

One of the villagers asked him if he had had good shooting that day. "Had he had good shooting? Why man!" And then followed accounts of the wonderful shooting he did that day, how he had brought them down out of the clouds, etc. Then a man who had been sitting behind the stove, with his hat pulled down over his eyes, arose and passed out and I thought I heard some muttered imprecations as the door closed behind him.

It was John L—— and he had seen samples of the city man's "wonderful" shooting that very day.

The Blue-Wing Teal.

The blue-wing teal is a splendid little bird but one has never much opportunity to shoot them over decoys as they do not remain in Northern latitudes after the weather gets severe. They are first of the migratory ducks to be on the move south in the Fall and the last to return north in the Spring. They fly very swiftly and true and are always in good condition and plump.

I am especially fond of hunting and shooting the blue-wing teal and in my opinion it is one of our finest game birds. I find many hunters admire the green-wing, but I much prefer to shoot the blue-wing as they are not nearly so erratic in their flight, do not dart around as the green-wing does, and do not shoot up into the air as the green-wing does when you fire at them, relying more on full speed ahead to take them out of danger.

I have seen blue-wing teal in such vast flocks in the Fall that they resembled huge swarms of bees. They must be very prolific and surely there is no better bird on the table.

“There is a charm about teal shooting which coaxes the sportsman to the resorts of these dainty birds at times before frost has tipped the rushes or silvered the meadows in the adjacent fields. Late September and early October are the months when teal are hunted in the North, and the warm bright sunshine of midday finds the birds feeding in the marsh, or basking along the banks of some stream, or at the sides of a dilapidated muskrat house near the edge of open water.”—*William Bruce Leffingwell.*



A Lucky Half Hour With the Blue-Wings on the Des Plaines River.

All russet-like across the golden sky,
A bunch of teal come sailing by.

—*Poems of Gun and Rod.*

One beautiful day in our grandest month, October, I was rowing on the Des Plaines River a short distance above its mouth. A stretch of the river along here for several miles is a favorite resort of the blue-wing teal.

There are here little coves and bayous bordered with rushes and there are numerous pond-lilies, water-cress and other aquatic plants growing along its borders. There are also little ponds at various points not far from the river and these ponds are a favorite resort of these dainty little birds.

Coming around a bend in the river I was within gunshot of a small flock of blue-wing teal before they had seen me or I had seen them. As they arose from the water I killed one with the first barrel and two with the second.

At the report of the gun a large flock of blue-wings flew out from the opposite shore some distance above me and alighted in the middle of the river. There was at least fifty or sixty in the flock.

They did not seem to be greatly alarmed and I quietly worked my boat into shore out of their sight and gradually dropped along close to shore down stream and around the bend. Here I could row without their seeing me so long as I did not go out into the river any distance.

They had quieted down and swam into shore and were apparently undisturbed and had evidently no thoughts of their enemy, man.

If I could get a shot into that flock I would surely get some ducks, for blue-wing teal fly closer together than any other of our ducks.

I dropped down the river about a quarter of a mile and was then able to cross over to the same side of the river where the ducks were but was nearly a half mile from them and out of their sight on account of the bend in the river. I rowed into shore, slipped some shells into the pockets of my hunting coat, and drew the boat up on the bank safely. I had marked about where the flock was located by trees on the opposite bank, as the banks are heavily wooded on this part of the Des Plaines.

Going back into the woods a sufficient distance I made a *detour* of about a quarter of a mile and came out again cautiously toward the river.

Sure enough, there they were directly opposite me and I had gauged it about right. By being careful not to tread on any sticks to alarm them I gradually worked within about 35 yards of them, as near as I could estimate the distance. It is against my principles to take pot shots, and I rarely shoot a bird on the water, but the flock was so closely bunched together I could not resist shooting the first barrel at them on the water.

I fired a shot at where they seemed to be gathered the thickest, and at the air appeared to be full of ducks at the report, I fired my second barrel into the midst of the bunch. There were seven or eight of the little beauties lying on the surface of the water and giving a few last spasmotic

flutters of their wings and kicking their feet. The balance of the flock flew on up the river out of sight.

There was hardly any current in the river at this point and the ducks lay where they had fallen, thirty-five or forty yards from shore and finally lay quiet. There were no wounded or wing-broken ones among them.

Being in no hurry to retrieve them, as my boat was down stream and they would float towards it anyway, I reloaded my gun and stood on the river bank a few minutes.

Glancing up the river, all at once I saw a flash of blue and white wings approaching me swiftly. A flock of teal were coming down the river at top speed and they were not apparently the same flock I had just fired at. I dropped down out of sight and they swung right in over the ducks lying on the water but did not seem to have any intention of stopping. They were within easy range, however, and I hastily got in both barrels in two cross-firing shots as they whizzed by me. There was a succession of splashes as a number of birds fell dead into the river near the others.

I reloaded again and was about to start down to get my boat when a third flock came down the river and, my dead ducks perhaps acting somewhat as decoys, they swung over them and I had two more shots at fairly close range.

When I came up with my boat to pick the ducks up and counted them I found that I had, including the three previously killed, thirty-two blue-wing teal, all killed within the space of a half hour, and no cripples.

Feeling somewhat guilty and thinking I had depopulated the duck family enough for one day, I moved out into the stream and started down the river for home.

Passing of the Passenger Pigeon.

On September 1, 1914, there died at the Cincinnati Zoological Gardens, the last passenger pigeon in the world, so far as is known. S. A. Stephan, general manager of the Cincinnati Zoological Company, states that they originally had at the Gardens eight of these birds, of which the one here referred to was the last.

The bird was sent to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington to be photographed, and later on was mounted. It is now on exhibition in the ornithological rooms of the National Museum.

How sad it seems that this beautiful bird is now gone forever! Once countless thousands in numbers, darkening the sky in its flight, and now but a forgotten memory!

One glorious October day, while hunting on the Illinois, I saw flock after flock of the passenger pigeons, coming from the North, each flock out of sight of the preceding one, and still following identically the same course in their flight.

Stationing myself in the trees bordering the river bank, during the course of the afternoon I shot about fifteen of these handsome birds. At various other times I have seen and bagged quite a number.

One of the peculiarities of the wild pigeon was that it would always alight in the tops of the tallest trees only, and invariably one destitute of leaves.

The bird was never so plentiful in Illinois as in Michigan, Wisconsin, and other States with heavier timber. There is considerable resemblance between the passenger pigeon and the mourning dove, or turtle dove. Yet one bird has been exterminated and the other not.



The Use of Decoys.

And eastward where the river winds along,
High up a pair of mallards wing their flight
With outstretched necks and pinions fleet and strong.

—*Poems of Gun and Rod.*

When entering a lake, bayou or marsh where you are going to use your decoys, note where the largest number of ducks are located. *That is the place to set out your decoys*, because that is either their feeding ground or their favorite resort, provided they have not been previously disturbed, and have flown or swam out to the middle of the open water for safety.

The more decoys you use the farther away the ducks can see them, and every hunter knows that ducks invariably prefer alighting where the largest number are assembled.

A few years ago my brother and myself took 100 decoys on our hunting expeditions. At times we used them all in one flock and both shot from one stand. At other times we split them up into two flocks of 50 each and located some distance apart and got more birds in this manner.

Some of the best shooting I have ever had I got over a flock of 20 or 25 decoys. Transporting a large number of decoys is sometimes considerable trouble and on the very stormy days, when the best shooting is to be had, ducks will come in quite as readily to a moderate sized flock.

Always set your decoys somewhat scattered out with an open expanse in the middle and some tollers pretty well off to windward for deep-water ducks. You cannot have tollers very far away for mallards, for they are liable to alight out of range.

While shooting over decoys, I have had several laughable experiences. On several occasions, when I have not been able to see them on account of an over-hanging bank, other hunters have almost blown my stools out of the water by a fusillade of shots. Their chagrin on discovering how they had been duped almost repaid me for the damage done.

To illustrate the ideas of some hunters about decoys Long tells a little story. He said one Spring day he and his hunting partners were coming up the Illinois, and, being overtaken by a rain-storm, took refuge temporarily in a warehouse on the river-front of the town. Among other spectators and visitors was a sporting New Yorker, with the latest in the way of hunting costumes. In answer to their inquiry as to whether game was plenty, the New Yorker said, "Yes, there was plenty of ducks, but they were fearfully wild!" Asking him what kind of decoys he used he said he had mallards, redheads, butterballs, canvasbacks, pintails and teal. A variety truly! In response to a further inquiry as to how many he had he said he had thirteen. They did not ask what the odd one was, being entirely satisfied as to why the ducks were so wild. Long and his partners subsequently found that the ducks decoyed very well to a good-sized flock of the proper proportions.

In shooting from a sink-box or battery on Chesapeake Bay and the Great South Bay of Long Island from 300 to 500 decoys are sometimes used.

It is not necessary to have more than two kinds of decoys. Mallard decoys for shoal-water ducks and canvasbacks for deep-water ducks. Bluebills and teal will decoy readily to either of these, as also do redheads. It is somewhat strange that although redheads and canvasbacks are so sim-

ilar in their habits, still they do not associate. But they are both very often found flocking with bluebills.

Do not use cheap decoys. The pride in having good decoys is so great that the extra cost is not to be considered. The most artistic decoys I have seen are made by Elliston, at Lake Senachwine (Putnam, Illinois). Mr. Elliston has spent more than twenty-five years of his life making boats and decoys.

Set out your decoys *where the ducks wish to feed.*

Long gives this as the great secret of success in shooting over decoys: *Set your decoys so that the sun will shine on them from the side by which the ducks approach.*



On the Grand Old Illinois.

Thou splendid river, widening through the meadows green.—*Longfellow.*

To one who loves boating, hunting and fishing the Illinois River is a source of continual joy. It is indeed a splendid stream. The beautiful expanses of water afford many a pleasant prospect. The magnificent trees which line its banks, the many creeks which flow into at intervals of every few miles, the beautiful islands which dot its waters and are scattered throughout its whole length and also numerous adjoining lakes in the valley of the Illinois make it a paradise for one who loves Nature and outdoor life.

What can be a more enjoyable outing than for a few choice spirits to journey along the Illinois, stopping each

night to camp in the splendid adjoining woods, and be for the time veritable water gypsies? Traveling by land is not to be compared for real pleasure with traveling by water. Some people in this present-day mad rush of living prefer a motor-boat, but for myself give me an easy-running row-boat and a pair of oars. It is the finest exercise in the world and surely beneficial to health.

I venture to say that no stream or body of water in America, unless possibly the Chesapeake Bay, has furnished such splendid wild-fowl shooting as the Illinois River ducking grounds. Many a day have I rowed a boat 10 and 12 miles and return in a day's trip, and sometimes even 15 miles and return, hunting on the way. Traveling up or down the river I have traveled as much as 35 miles in a day.

Among the towns noted for duck shooting in their neighborhood are Morris, Ottawa, De Pue, Hennepin, Henry, Lacon, Chillicothe, Rome, Liverpool, Havana, Browning, Beardstown, Meredosia, Naples and Kampsville. Except on the upper reaches of the river, little shooting is done in the main channel, the birds frequenting the adjoining water along the river almost entirely.

"I do not wonder that the old French voyageurs loved the Illinois River, and risked their lives and their fortunes gladly to visit and to dwell by it. The fascination that it had for La Salle, for Tonti, for Joliet, for Marquette, and for the countless explorers who frequented this trail to the Southwest, still lies upon it, waiting. Its clear water, its gentle current, its fretless channel, its green-clad, bordering hillsides, its fabulous grain fields, its forests, conspire to weave about the drifting traveler a spell which he is loath to break."—*John L. Matthews.*



Live Mallard Decoys Calling in Mallards, Illinois River Country.
Photo by Vincent Taylor, Chicago.

Old Times on the Green River Marshes.

Last green that to the touch of Autumn yields,
As o'er the land her mystic spell she wields.

—*Rhymes of Stream and Forest.*

BY ROSS KINER.

I cannot tell just when I was inoculated with the insidious virus of the duck shooter; it must have been at a very early date, for I can remember, years and years ago it seems, of standing in the street, wooden toy gun in hand (we lived at the very edge of the village), watching the pintails, mallards and the brant, as they swung high overhead, paying no attention to my childish calls of "Bang!" "Bang!" as I loaded and fired that wooden gun in rapid pantomime. Swinging and drifting with the wind the ducks would come on their way to the famous Green River bottoms, their first stop after leaving the Illinois River marshes, on their way to their breeding ground in the Northland.

Then down town of evenings I watched wide eyed the hunters coming in, backload after backload of ducks, ducks, ducks, and if it was of a Saturday night, and some of the old-timers from up river came to town, Kramer, Huslander, or the Dutro boys, it was a wagon load they brought of pintail, mallard, teal and widgeon, brant, and sometimes a few Canadas, or an occasional swan. Mallards brought 50 cents the pair those days, pintails and the smaller ducks 20 to 30 cents. It was a sight to watch the sorting of the game, for few of those old-timers were not above trying to slip in a "pick-up" that had lain perhaps overlong and was altogether too ripe.

"Pick-ups!" Why, I can remember one Fall when the river had gone on a rampage, all the cornfields skirting the river were under water, one Monday after an exceptionally

bleak and windy Sunday, a friend of mine, taking his water spaniel, and by simply wading the overflowed fields, never firing a shot, he gathered and brought into town thirty-seven dead and crippled birds, the aftermath of the evening before.

PASSING OF THE MARSHLAND.

Philip came in the other day bringing with him four beautiful ears of corn. Spreading them out on the window ledge he said: "There! just look at that corn, raised right in the middle of what was St. Peter's marsh. I brought you those to show the boys what kind of crops could be raised right where you used to shoot ducks."

"Huh!" as if I cared how much or how good corn was raised so long as they had ruined the best duck marsh in Illinois. Corn! all corn! Corn across the flat of Nower's pasture; corn where the muskrat houses were; corn crowding in on the Meredosia's bed; corn on the Mud Creek bottoms. Kismet! It is fate!

Yesterday, only yesterday, I picked up the little 22 and leaving Rickel's store, I wandered north by west across the pasture land, along the deep "dredge ditch," until I came to that wooded island that used to lie, all marsh surrounded, in the center of the "big slough," the slough that used to run from the Green River to the Rock, with at the center a divide, the water of the southern slope sullen or rapid as the grade permitted, finally swelling the narrow and tortuous Green River; the other spinning to the north, plunging with a swirl into the Rock, at the mouth of the round bayou. Corn, all corn! I stood beneath the black oaks and looked toward the east, there where the cattails and rushes

grew; there where Harry's "pump" failed him; there where the mallards, at sunset, swinging into roost left their toll as the little Parker called "Spang! spang! spat! spat!" you could hear those chilled 7's strike as the Dupont drove them home, "Two greenheads" and now, corn, all corn. North and westward, ah! that wild meadow on that April day, jack snipe after jack snipe, "scaiping" from the cover of fresh sprouting flag and smartweed. Again and again the 16-bore flashes to the shoulder, again and again the Dupont snaps out its challenge. "Gee!" what a dead center on that bird that hung for just a breath upwind.

Corn, all corn! Southward to that bog emerald-studded pasture where on that April evening I lay prostrate alongside that little pool, my only blind a few dead weeds stuck here and there around me. "Querreck! querreck" chuckled my live decoys "Querreck! querreck! come and lunch with me." "Now! well! of all the bling, blasted misses!"

Corn, all corn! Corn where that pair of pintail met their fate. Corn, all corn, the length and breadth of the Green River marshes. Corn, all corn in the mucky beds of the Twin Lakes. "Kismet," why rail at fate! Oft times when my lusty brothers of the plow bewail the yearly and ever-increasing drouths, those continued, long-drawn out, sun-scorched summers, I say: "You have dredged and ditched and tiled too much. You cannot get the moisture from clouds over land that has no moisture." Then, those lusty square-shouldered fellows, who speak so learnedly of potash and of phosphate, of hill drop and powdered lime, laugh me to scorn and say: "Huh! if you had *your way*, all you would have would be a duck slough." Perhaps that, too, is true.

The Mallard.

The mallard is truly a splendid bird and one reason why he is so much admired is because it takes more skill to circumvent the wily fellow than it does some others of the duck family.

When a flock of mallards are about to alight in a pond in the prairie or are coming into your decoys, they circle about countless times, inspecting the place from all sides to see if everything looks just right before dropping in.

The mallard associates more or less with nearly all of the different varieties of non-diving ducks, probably with the pintail the most.

In times gone by there has been a great deal of mallard shooting in little ponds in the corn-fields in the Spring, and at times the overflowed area along the great rivers has been quite extensive, and is a great resort of these birds, but now that we have prohibition of Spring shooting, there is an end to this so far as the duck hunter is concerned.

The mallard's favorite habitat is little rush-surrounded ponds rather than stretches of open water. When these secluded ponds are frozen they then are driven to the larger expanses of adjoining lakes and rivers.

The best mallard shooting is generally to be had in the most severe weather, as the birds will not leave as long as there is any open water, and during snow-storms and heavy wind-storms are the times when the best sport is to be had.

The mallard responds to the call probably more readily than most any of the wild ducks.

MALLARD DUCK.
1/2 Lifesize.



Three Empty Shells—Three Mallard Ducks.

Oh! for a day in the white wind's cheek,
To share the mallard's stroke of power;
To follow the rush of the upper air,
And flying a hundred miles an hour.

—*A Day on the Yukon.*

It was in the early part of December and the Illinois was frozen over, but a number of successive warm days had melted the ice enough so that there were patches of open water here and there where the current was strongest and a few ducks still lingered after the general migration for the South of the main body of wild-fowl.

It was not possible to ascend or descend the Illinois River in a boat, however, as there was only occasional expanses of the river which was not frozen.

My brother Henry and I loaded our boat and decoys into a light wagon and with a good pair of horses drove up east of Morris about five miles and then drove south until we reached the river bank opposite Goose Island in the Illinois. There we unloaded the boat and decoys and then drove the team over to the nearest farmhouse and stabled them.

Returning to our boat, we were able to cross over to the lower end of Goose Island by way of Stony Point, as there was a strip of open water leading over to the island at the lower end from the mainland. There was also open water along the south shore of the island and here we set out our decoy ducks about opposite the middle of the island.

We had an occasional shot at a stray duck, but the main body of ducks seemed to have left for a warmer climate. Sometimes we would see a small flock of ducks over the

great prairies southeast of us, where some cattle were being fed corn to fatten them for the market.

Finally, late in the afternoon my brother was prowling around among the willow trees on the other side of the island and had left me watching the decoys to take care of any stray ducks which might happen along.

He had left his gun loaded and cocked, lying on the ground alongside me, while my own gun was lying across my knees, also loaded and cocked, as we had not begun to use hammerless guns at that time.

Under the influence of the pleasant rays of the sun and being sheltered from the slight northerly wind that was blowing, I dropped into a light sleep.

All at once I was awakened by hearing the rush of powerful wings and looked up to see three mallard ducks climbing up and away from our decoys as fast as they could, going almost straight upward in the manner they always do when frightened. They had evidently alighted among the decoys without disturbing me, but soon became suspicious and frightened and the noise of their whirring wings as they arose into the air had awakened me.

They were about 30 yards away in the air when I first saw them and were putting on the high speed without losing any time.

I at once grabbed my gun, fired at the one nearest me, he dropped; another shot and the next one dropped; I seized my brother's gun, took aim and at the report of the gun the third and last one dropped, all of them being stone dead. I was somewhat doubtful about getting the last one, as he was a good distance away before I fired, but he succumbed, falling like a wet rag.

Mallard Shooting in the Overflowed Timber.

A river winding through the marsh.—*Poems of Gun and Rod.*

The mallard is indeed a noble bird, but is very wary and cautious, and with extremely sharp vision and keen hearing. Timber mallard shooting in the overflowed woods bordering a river like the Illinois is fine sport and perhaps one then has these splendid birds at a disadvantage, for they have to come down through openings between the great oak and maple trees to your decoys set in an open place in the timber and so cannot exercise their extreme vigilance so well.

There is not so much timber shooting on the upper Illinois, but I once spent three weeks at Senachwine Lake, near Hennepin, Illinois, and shot in the overflowed timber every day. I usually killed from two to three dozen mallards each day. There are some experienced callers in that locality who can literally talk the duck language. It is well to use the caller almost continuously in timber shooting, because many times the ducks are within hearing distance although you cannot see them on account of the heavy timber. Many of the hunters now use live callers around Henry, Chillicothe, Beardstown and other points on the Illinois.

I have had some excellent timber mallard shooting in the Au Sable Creek timber five miles above Morris, Illinois, on the Illinois River. At times the weather was exceedingly severe and the birds were seeking the timber for shelter.

The Prairie Chicken, or Pinnated Grouse.

The prairie chicken or pinnated grouse is truly one of America's most splendid game birds, but is now threatened with extinction. There should be a closed season for a term of years in all States where there are any birds left, and this has been done by some of the States.

There are still some prairie chickens to be found in Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and some of the other Middle Western States, but the best shooting is now to be had in Minnesota, Montana, the Dakotas and the Northwest.

The dividing up of large farms into smaller ones and the converting of prairie lands into corn-fields has had much to do with the decrease of prairie chickens in the Middle Western States for the prairie chicken does not follow civilization but retreats from it.

They thrive best where there are large tracts of prairie with corn and oat fields adjoining. Although an upland bird they love to frequent meadows where there is long, coarse grass for cover, very often bordering ponds.

The prairie chicken can endure extreme cold weather and does not usually migrate at the approach of winter.

During the early part of the season the hunting is done mostly in stubble-fields morning and evening over dogs. Later on in October and November they frequent the corn-fields and are not very easy to bag while the corn is still standing, that is, unhusked. I have always found them very regular and methodical in their habits, visiting certain fields daily at about the same hour.

Late in the Fall the birds are very strong on the wing because the young are then fully matured.



PRAIRIE HEN.

$\frac{2}{3}$ Life-size.

A Shot at a Prairie Chicken.

She was up and away,
Like a rifle-smoke
Blown through the woods,
That lingers a moment,
But never to stay.

—*Bret Harte.*

BY ROSS KINER.

From over the hill where the sun is setting there comes some specks of brown, now clear cut against the orange of the western sky, now fading, indistinct, among the hillside shadows, then plunging into view and volplaning they settle within ten yards of me. "Chickens!" I dare not move. Slowly, warily, an old cock bird approaches down the ditch bank, cocking his head from side to side, he stalks closer, closer. "Just a log," he is saying to himself, "Just a log." "I ain't afraid." Then the strain becoming more than I can bear, I turn my head the very teeniest trifle, a brown shell explodes upon the ditch's bank, another and another. "Why didn't you bust a pair?" Scrub asks as I rejoin him. "What? Chickens in the Spring?" "Sure," he replies. "Why not? Just as well chickens as ducks. What's the difference?" On that I ponder all the long moonlit homeward way. "Just as well chickens as ducks in the Spring." What *is* the difference?

A Duck Hunt in Louisiana.

Through canebrakes dense and cypress woods,
That darkened each remote lagoon,
Or bayou hid in solitudes.

—Isaac McLellan.

BY H. M. WIDDOWSON.

One evening, while walking down Canal Street, in the old town of New Orleans, I espied a party of hunters with their hunting-coat pockets bulging out, and showing other signs of having made a successful bag. Was I interested? Oh, no! Interested would not be the word at all. I was “infected” on sight with the hunting fever. I had heard that the ducks had arrived from the North, and the sight of those guns and those bulging pockets and mud-stained hunting togs “got my goat.” I just *had* to go hunting, and that was all there was to it. So, of course, I had to find out where to go and how to get there, as I had never hunted in a locality so far south before.

Next day I got real busy, finding out among my friends and acquaintances where to go and who wanted to go with me, and before night had found two other “bugs” as badly bitten as myself. Here are their names: Fish and Hunt. This may seem a little strange, but it is fact, for all that. Fish was purchasing agent for the Morgan Line Steamship Company and Hunt was a real estate man. The three of us boarded at the same house in St. Charles Street, near La-Fayette Square. So we arranged to start on the following afternoon.

For duck guns, Fish had a fine made-to-order Winchester repeater, with 30-inch barrel; Hunt carried a beautiful Fox double gun. I had an old-time English double-barrel cylinder-bore gun, with 27-inch barrels, and was guyed all the way out on the train about trying to shoot mallards and other large ducks, with their winter plumage on, with a little cylinder-bore "sawed-off."

Our destination was "Lake Catherine," a small lake along the Louisville & Nashville Railway, between New Orleans and Pass Christian, Mississippi. The whole country along the railroad is more or less a flat sheet of water, and low ground just a few inches above water—a regular Ducks' Paradise.

We arrived at the station in time for supper, and "such a supper!" I never will forget it! We found lodgings with a French "Cayjan" (*Arcadian*) by the name of Joe. He and his good wife made a business of catering to hunters and fishermen—and they surely knew their business. Their house stood on stilts, and was simply a large, rough board shack, but everything (beds included) was spotlessly clean and neat. The supper consisted of crab gumbo soup, "craw-fish" (French style), boiled rice, Mexican frijoles, corn pone, fried plantains, hot biscuits, baked pampano, and French drip coffee "that would do for ink." Was it strong? Yes, it was!—and it's the kind I like.

The last thing before going to bed we told Joe to get us up in time to be in our blinds by daylight. "Nevaire mind, you faller! By gar, Ah been here long taim, an' I know my beez. You do laik Joe say an' you geet beeg duck—plenty duck! Plenty mud-hen, mabbe! You laik mud-hen? No!"

The next thing I remembered, after going to sleep, was

Joe's lighting a candle and bringing in a steaming pot of his famous coffee and a can of condensed cream. While we drank our coffee, Joe told us the pirogues were all ready, with decoys, paddles, push poles and everything fixed, ready to start. "By gar, Ah t'ink Ah go 'long. You t'ree fine faller! You-all Yankee, enty? You-all know how push pirogue? No!"

Breakfast over, we took the four pirogues and started. Hunt and Fish had been in all kinds of boats, but a pirogue was new to them. They were good swimmers, however, so they did not hesitate to tackle them. A pirogue is simply a dugout canoe, made out of a cypress log; about 28 or 30 inches wide and some 15 feet long, and much more cranky than any birchbark canoe. In fact, a factory-built canoe is like a flat-boat for steadiness, as compared with a genuine Louisiana pirogue.

Joe took the lead and we started. For a while we were not sure that we were all going to stay on the upper side of those dugouts. I felt pretty much at home in mine, which was the smallest one in the lot, as I had been paddling canoes since I was a kid, but Fish and Hunt kept guying each other and offering to make bets as to which one would get dumped first.

It was well for us that Joe came along for we would never have been able to find our way to the shooting "pass." We paddled through all kinds of lanes among small islands which were covered with tall reeds and grass, and in less than fifteen minutes I did not know where we were. The whole place looked alike to me, and it was so dark that I could hardly see the dugout in front of me. I was in the rear, Joe in the lead, Fish and Hunt between us, but in



Headwaters of the Illinois River. Junction of the Kankakee and Des Plaines.
Photo from Dresden Heights at an altitude of 200 feet. By W. M. Lyon.

these waters it makes no difference how dark the night is; every stroke of the paddle makes a blaze of silvery phosphorescent light, which lights up the man in the canoe so that he can be seen, unless the paddle be dipped very carefully.

Now and then a bunch of coots would go flapping away from in front of us, leaving a trail of light, as they partly ran and partly flew on the surface of the phosphorescent water, and every fish (except the one in the canoe!) would leave a fiery wake behind him, when disturbed by the dug-outs.

Arriving at the blinds without mishap, Joe stationed us at different points around a small island which was simply a quaking mud bar a few inches above the water, with grass and reeds growing on it. It was a pass or fly-way between Lake Ponchartrain and Mississippi Sound, which empties into the Gulf of Mexico. While sitting in my pirogue I recalled the lines of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*:

Water! Water! everywhere,
And not a drop to drink!

But Joe had fixed that. He had put a bottle of water in each dugout, as the water in these passes is all salt—including that of Lake Ponchartrain.

Joe had warned us not to shoot before broad daylight (as that is the law in Louisiana); also we must stop shooting at noon. I sat there and pointed my gun at several flocks of mallards and could have gotten several of them, but I had to wait till daylight. Fish was stationed to my right, just out of gun range, and Hunt the same distance to my left. Joe was stationed on the far side of the pass, but within sight of us. Fish was the first to score. I was watching a flock of redheads headed my way, when Fish began work-

ing his pump gun into a bunch of mallards. I looked around and saw two of them come tumbling down and one already flopping on the water. "Hooray!" says Fish. "Do you think that your old sawed-off gun would do that?" But I was real busy just then, as two of the same bunch swung over me, and I got them both with a quick right and left, making a clean kill with each shot. When I looked around again, there was Fish, up to his middle in the water, towing his capsized dugout to shore—calling to me to come over and help him and cursing the first Indian or white man that ever made a canoe out of a log.

While I was helping Fish get his boots off and the water out of them, Joe and Hunt were banging away at the ducks. Finally, Fish was in shape to shoot; so I went back to my dugout, and soon had three redheads and five small ducks similar to our bluebills (I forgot their local name). By this time the flight was over, and Fish had started for the house, as he was wet and cold and the little bottle I had given him was empty. Joe and Hunt knocked over a few mud-hens, and then they started back—leaving me still in my "blind" (if a few long reeds and bunches of grass can be called a blind). Joe called to me and said: "Don't forget to stop shoot at 10 o'clock, or you geet our Game Warden down here mighty queek!"

After they were gone, I got a pair of green-wing teal that came to my decoys; then started back, hunting mud-hens on the way, and arrived at Joe's shack at 12:30 with two mallards, a pair of teal, three redheads and five common ducks, and more than that many coots or mud-hens. Fish and Hunt had seventeen ducks between them and a big bunch of mud-hens.

When we had changed our clothes and cleaned our guns and ourselves, dinner was ready. I had been "sniffing" garlic and onions and stewed duck from the time I sighted the house on my way in, and I tell you, it was "some smell" to a lot of hungry duck hunters. But I nearly forgot. When Fish got back to the shack, Joe's wife gave him some of Joe's clothes, so that she could dry Fish's clothes before the fire, and maybe he was not a comical sight. Joe was about 5 feet 4 inches in height, and Fish was about 6 feet 3; so you can imagine how he looked.

Dinner? You should have been there and seen us eat! Better still, you should have helped us eat it. Roast ducks, baked sweet potatoes, stewed oysters (from Bayou Barataria), shrimps, stuffed crabs, hot biscuits with cane syrup, and some more of that French coffee. That meal would have cost us \$3 each at a New Orleans hotel, and not been one-half so appetizing, and I forgot to mention a dish of stewed mud-hen with plenty of garlic and onions, celery and parsley. It was the best dish on the table. Everything was cooked in genuine French Creole style.

After dinner we smoked some cigars, had a good chat with Joe and his wife, and late in the afternoon we boarded our train for home, where we arrived in time for a late supper. We had enough ducks to supply the table of our landlady for several days; but we all agreed that Joe's wife was the best cook of them all.—*Sports Afield.*

The Wood Duck.

Wood ducks are the most graceful of any of the wild ducks, and have most strange nocturnal habits, nightly visiting every stretch of water along the wooded streams and ponds for miles around their habitat. They also make a flight nearly every afternoon to some adjoining stream or lake, always preferring those surrounded by timber. They do not pay much attention to decoys, but sometimes will fly by the blind within gunshot.

I have reason to believe that they return to the same locality to nest each successive season. Of all ducks, the beautiful wood duck should certainly be given protection.

Wallace Evans has both the wood duck and the mandarin duck of china in his large collection of game birds at his preserve at St. Charles and I have had an opportunity to compare their plumage. Of course I slightly favor the native bird as a matter of patriotism. Each bird is beautiful in a different way in the same manner that one flower is handsome and another one equally so. The plumage of the mandarin duck is a blending of different shades of brown, while the wood duck's general coloring is mostly of darker tints.

The wood duck is a very swift flier and on occasion can go through the timber at a high speed when flushed along some wooded stream.

They love to frequent bends in the rivers and creeks rather than straight stretches of the streams and usually nest in trees.

I stopped shooting wood ducks in the Spring twenty-five years ago and advised other hunters to do likewise.

WOOD DUCK.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ Life-size.





On the Habits of Various Varieties of Water-Fowl.

By Gardiner's and by Shelter Isle,
Far out on sandy bar and shoal,
These swarming water-fowl disport,
Wherever salty billows roll.

—Isaac McLellan.

Wild ducks are marvelously swift and true fliers. The canvasback has been called the swiftest flier of the duck family, but the redhead, bluebill, green and blue-wing teal as nearly as swift. While the mallard is comparatively slow in flight, they describe many beautiful curves and gyrations in alighting. In spring-time, when the bottom lands are flooded, they will come down through openings between the great oak trees in a nearly perpendicular line.

The habits of the mallard are different from those of the redhead or canvasback, those of the blue-wing or green-wing teal are different from those of the wood duck, and those of the bluebill are different from the pintail or goldeneye.

Wild ducks may be divided into two classes, deep-water ducks and shoal-water ducks. The first named dive for their food. The latter do not. When wounded, shoal-water ducks go upon land *at once*, and seek to hide in the rushes or brush. Deep-water ducks *never* go upon land and seek to escape by swimming and diving. The deep-water ducks include bluebills, redheads, canvasbacks, goldeneyes, and several smaller varieties; the shoal-water ducks are mallards, pintails, blue and green-wing teal, wood ducks, widgeons or bald-pates, gadwalls, etc.

Big bags of ducks are a thing of the past now, which is as it should be. The amount of game secured should be a secondary consideration to all true sportsmen; the chief pleasure should be that of enjoying the benefits of outdoor life.

Nowadays if a hunter secures a few ducks he should be satisfied. One day last October on a day's hunt I bagged eight blue-wing teal and had as much pleasure as if it were a much larger number. I had the pleasure of being out in the glorious Autumn weather and I had a grand trip on the old Illinois. I would have enjoyed it if I had not shot any ducks.

All deep-water ducks always rise against the wind. By taking advantage of this fact and approaching them with the wind at your back, if the flock is a small one, very often you can row near enough to get a good shot, as they hesitate about coming towards you until it is too late and you are within range of them as they rise.

During considerable hunting on the Platte and Missouri Rivers I was surprised to find how much more plentiful the spoonbill was there than farther east. They never afford a great deal of sport to the hunter at any time, however.

On some days when the ducks are not moving about much, one can get considerable sport by rowing along a river that is fringed by willow trees and rushes and shooting the ducks as they fly away from shore at your approach. They are usually on the wing before you discover them. Also at times one can have similar sport by walking along the edges of ponds where there are rushes, pond-lilies and other aquatic plants by which the birds are concealed until you are within gun-shot as they take wing.

One of America's Most Famous Duck Hunters.

Although there have been and are now many crack duck shots in various parts of the country, I consider the late Fred Kimble, of Peoria, Illinois, was the star duck hunter of the country. He did much hunting on the Illinois River in localities where game was very plentiful. In company with Joseph W. Long he made several trips down the Illinois in the Fall, thence down the Mississippi to the sunk lands of Arkansas and Missouri (caused by the earthquake of 1812), hunting on the way, and spending the winter near New Madrid, Mo., and shooting during the Spring flight north in the Spring. On numerous occasions Kimble has killed over 100 ducks in a day. His shooting was done in the '70's, '80's and '90's. Of course game was much more plentiful then than now and there was no bag limit.

Kimble had a single-barrel 8-gauge gun in which he shot an ounce and a half of shot, and John Forsyth, formerly agent of the Adams Express Company at Peoria, told me he had seen Kimble make 100 consecutive shots at ducks in one day, not missing a shot. He killed over 100 ducks, because numberless times he killed several at a discharge.

Joseph W. Long, Kimble's hunting partner on several duck-hunting expeditions, said any duck that came within gunshot of Fred Kimble, would save trouble by coming down at once.

I have seen Kimble do considerable pigeon shooting at the traps, but no duck shooting. R. B. Organ, of Chicago, offered to match him to shoot with Dr. Carver at 100 live pigeons, 30 yards rise, use of *one barrel*, and posted a forfeit, but Carver would not accept.

The following is an account of his duck shooting taken from J. W. Long's *American Wild-Fowl Shooting*:

DUCK SHOOTING DONE BY FRED KIMBLE.

I subjoin a memorandum of shooting done by a friend of the author, Mr. Fred Kimble, a genuine duck shooter, during the spring of 1872, all with a single-barreled *muzzle-loader*, 9 gauge. Not over three ducks were killed at any one shot, and most all singly.

| | | | | |
|----------|----|---------------|------|--------|
| February | 27 | killed | 70 | ducks. |
| " | 28 | " | 74 | " |
| " | 29 | " | 81 | " |
| March | 1 | " | 76 | " |
| " | 2 | " | 106 | " |
| " | 3 | " | 61 | " |
| " | 4 | didn't shoot. | | |
| " | 5 | killed | 66 | ducks. |
| " | 6 | " | 107 | " |
| " | 7 | " | 57 | " |
| " | 8 | " | 65 | " |
| " | 9 | " | 82 | " |
| " | 10 | " | 60 | " |
| " | 11 | " | 72 | " |
| " | 12 | " | 128 | " |
| " | 13 | didn't shoot. | | |
| " | 14 | killed | 122 | ducks. |
| " | 15 | " | 70 | " |
| " | 16 | " | 68 | " |
| <hr/> | | | | |
| | | Total | 1365 | " |

Total 1365 ducks, 17 days' shooting, and 5 brant not included in the memorandum. His ammunition gave out almost every day. These ducks were nearly all mallards.

A Stormy Crossing On the Illinois.

Death frowns o'er the foaming flood.—*Thomas Gray.*

The March wind had been blowing a gale for three days from the northwest, with occasional snow and a low thermometer. The Illinois River was several feet above the ordinary stage of water but was not out of its banks, which made it more dangerous to navigate, as when the banks are overflowed a person can row along back of the trees which line the river-bank and be out of the main channel of the river and of course the waves are much smaller there.

After remaining at home two days on account of the storm my brother Gussie and I on the third day could not stand the pressure of seeing flocks of mallards flying back and forth on Mazon Creek across from and above Morris, and determined to get over there with a boat and our decoy ducks. It was useless to try and go any distance on the river as no headway could be made at all going against the wind and heavy sea. The mountainous waves were dashing up against the south bank of the river with such great force and the spray was freezing onto the trees and bank where it struck.

How to cross the river without capsizing in the icy water was the problem. The Mazon empties into the Illinois just above the bridge crossing the river at Morris. We decided it was too dangerous to try and cross the river at that point. Then we thought we would carry our boat across the bridge on foot and then try and ascend the river the short distance to the mouth of the creek. But after walk-

ing across the bridge and noting the sea that was running on the south shore we gave up that idea.

Finally we thought we would try and cross the river at Antis' Island, which is a small island just above Morris and located nearly in the middle of the river. Loading our decoys into the boat we started out. After crossing safely over to the island from the north shore, we set out on the last half and more dangerous part of the journey. Our boat rode the waves very gallantly and the spray from the crest of the waves froze on our hunting coats where it struck us. When we neared the shore a big wave carried us right up on the bank. We sprang out and drew the boat up out of reach of any succeeding waves. We then dragged the boat across the corn-field a couple of hundred yards and reached the Mazon, where we set out our decoys and by 5 P. M. we had shot about twenty-five mallards and a half dozen teal.

At is was nearing sundown the wind began to die down considerable and we descended the Mazon to the Illinois and crossed the river safely and reached home about 6 P. M. none the worse for our adventure, and thankful for our victory over the elements and safe return, as we were the only ones who ventured out on the river that day.

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The Reelfoot Lake basin at twilight, when the screech-owls are quavering out their lost-soul dirges in the gathering gloom, is one of the most desolate places on earth. Above us the scudding clouds hid the face of the moon and arched in flying columns that eerie graveyard of tree-snags and owls.—*Robert Lindsay Mason.*



GADWALL.
(*Anas Strepera*)
Nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ Life-size.

The Gadwall, or Gray Duck.

Less is probably known about the gadwall than almost any of our water-fowl that inhabit the interior of North America.

I have sometimes read of them being seen in large numbers in the far North, and the Dakotas, especially on their breeding grounds, but for myself I cannot say that I have ever seen them plentiful. Generally I have only observed small flocks and more often a single bird or a pair.

Mr. Ridgway, the ornithologist, states that he found them more numerous than all other varieties of ducks during the breeding season in Western Nevada, in the valley of the Truckee River.

They frequent Currituck and Albemarle Sounds to some extent during the Winter, though in moderate numbers.

There seems to be something mysterious and almost uncanny about the gadwall. A number of times I have flushed a gadwall some distance from the water from the coarse grass bordering a river or lake. The bird was not wounded in any way, but seemed to prefer his hermit existence, and to be just as well satisfied to be a greater distance from the water than most members of the duck family.

The gadwall loves to frequent shallow lakes and ponds, and its habits generally resemble those of the mallard.

During the middle of the day they like to hide away in the tall marsh grass to rest or sleep.

There are several things about the gadwall that remind one of the widgeon and they seem to be a sort of second cousin to that bird and often a few gadwalls will be found with a large flock of widgeons.

Memories of Other Days.

Where among the water-lilies
Pishnekuh, the brant, were sailing;
Through the tufts of rushes floating,
Steering through the reedy islands.

—*Longfellow.*

BY P. C. DARBY.

The soft March winds have been blowing from the south and the snow has all turned to water, the ponds and low places are all filled up. The sprigs and mallards are in their glory, with scarcely anyone to disturb them in their revelry. Have rarely seen so many mallards so early in the season. It brings back memories of other Springs long ago when I was in the blind with some of my boyhood hunting companions when the March winds were blowing strong and ducks were beating up against it, of the pretty kills and the unaccountable misses we made. It was the kills we remembered the longest, however, and not the ones that got away.

Our children will never know the beauty of the March days of marsh and stream, as we knew them; and how we looked forward to the first signs of the coming of the ducks in the Spring. When I was a boy, before I could shoot a gun, I have watched them pass by the hour, and longed for the time when I would be old enough to go hunting.

As I sit here, my mind wanders back over the years that have gone; of the pleasant days spent with the game birds, Nature and some good companions. As we grow older, time cannot erase these bright spots from our memory.

Today brings back to me the memory of a March day five years ago. The wind was strong from the south and it looked like a storm. A boy who was cutting stalks over in a field near a little pond came running up to where I was and told me that a flock of geese had just alighted in the pond. I made preparations to go goose hunting at once, taking my Winchester shot gun. My little brother, who was only 14 years old, went along and carried the Parker.

We crawled up as close to the pond as we could, and up they went, about 40 yards away from us. There were fifteen in the flock. My brother beat me to it and downed three. Then I proceeded to get busy, and accounted for six more, which made us nine in all. And such a load for the two of us to carry, but you know. We gave the boy who told us about them one and I don't think he ever stopped until he arrived at his home. He did not cut any more stalks, anyway, that day, he was so excited.

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What delightful recollections an autumn sunset sometimes recalls! Were you ever in the marsh when the sun was setting, tinging the western sky with a rose-tinted glow, and ducks were coming to your decoys with great regularity? Far to the west the ducks are moving in great clouds in their evening flight, and dropping into the marsh with reckless abandon are mallards, widgeons, pintails, red-heads, and now and then a flock of canvasbacks. A pair have stolen away from the many, and with silent flight are coming down the marsh skimming the rush tips, until they see a flock of decoys, then they make a wide circuit so as to alight upwind among them.—*William Bruce Leffingwell.*

The Redhead.

The redhead is one of our best wild-fowl and is found to some extent, at least, on most of the ducking waters of the United States. Being a diving duck, it prefers the open waters to the smaller ponds and sloughs.

Some hunters think the redhead is becoming more scarce. However that may be, Mr. Herbert K. Job states that he found a larger number of eggs in the nest of the redhead than in that of any of our wild ducks in the far North.

Redheads have a habit of flying up and down the bodies of water which they frequent in large flocks mornings and evenings, generally well up in the air, and I have at times seen flocks of redheads that would extend across the entire main channel of the Illinois. I have also seen them in large number on the Missouri River.

Redheads fly closely together and generally in perfect alignment. When the hunter gets a cross-firing shot sometimes several are killed at a discharge.

In its habits the redhead greatly resembles the bluebill, and they associate together considerable. It decoys quite as well as the bluebill, especially on their feeding grounds.

The redhead has the habit of flying by just outside of your decoys, apparently not seeing them, and then after they have got just beyond you, suddenly turning back and coming into the decoys. They are not nearly so suspicious as canvasbacks.

This bird frequents salt water as well as fresh, and is greatly esteemed by Eastern and Southern gunners on the sea coasts. The flesh of the redhead is excellent.



RED HEADED DUCK.
 $\frac{1}{4}$ Lifesize.

The Wild Goose Who Lost His Bearings.

And in flocks the wild goose, Wawa,
Flying to the fen-lands northward.

—*Longfellow.*

Many times I have observed that when a wild goose or brant becomes separated from a flock and sort of lives to himself, as it were, he loses the extreme caution which these wary birds usually possess. I have killed quite a number of these solitary birds, both geese and brant, during my career as a hunter, and always in some unusual manner.

In company with my brother I have hunted wild geese considerable in Illinois, but have been much more successful in hunting them on the Platte and Missouri Rivers in Nebraska. There they fly back and forth from the fields to the sand bars on the rivers, which are a favorite resort of wild geese. One of our successful methods was to locate a flock some distance below us on the river and then float down in our boat, not using the oars at all, as the Missouri has a strong current in most places.

But this goose was shot on the Kankakee under somewhat unusual circumstances. My brother and myself were coming up the river one day in late November and the wind was blowing a gale. The river at this point flows north and the wind was from the west and had a clear sweep across the prairies for several miles.

We had seen a number of flocks of wild geese flying over these prairies to the west of us and finally we saw a flock coming straight toward us, but high in the air. They were perhaps a half mile away when we first saw them. However, if they did not change their course they would pass directly over us and we hurriedly rowed our boat to shore and ran to the top of the bank before they could see us and awaited their approach.

They came over our heads, but at such a height that it seemed almost useless to shoot at them. However, we fired four shots into them at long range and at the report of our guns one came down lifeless. Another bird was either struck in the body or utterly bewildered, for he sailed down from the balance of the flock and alighted in the middle of the river half a mile away and set there with his head in the air evidently trying to figure out where he was. The rest of the flock had passed out of sight with many clamorings.

Finally the solitary goose arose and started up the middle of the river. When he had gone a short distance he appeared to change his mind and thought he would cross over to the prairies west again. But as he tried to cross over the strong wind striking him caused him to drift out over the river and he was gradually coming nearer to us. He had apparently forgotten where we were located, although he could see us plainly enough when he was sitting in the center of the river. He was determined to cross over to the west to the prairies, however, and finally came over our heads not 30 yards high. Two guns sounded as one report and he fell stone dead. Had he flown to any other point of the compass it would have been safe for him and there he came right back into the danger zone and death for him!

CANADA GOOSE.

$\frac{1}{4}$ Lifesize.

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Camping Along the Illinois in "the Good Old Days."

Home by the river's rippled sheen.—*Longfellow.*

What camp-fires roared along the Illinois in those days! It saddens me to think that those days will come no more for me. Driftwood piled as high as we could throw it, shot a glare across the river until the dead cottonwoods looked like imploring ghosts with arms stretched heavenward, and we could almost see the white collars on the necks of the geese that passed high above us. Bunches of mallards, wood ducks, sprigtails, etc., hung about the fire, with every color glowing brightly as in the evening sun, and naught was needed save a string of trout or a deer to make the scene complete.

Little did I hear of the song or the jest or the laughter that almost woke the echoes from the eastern bluffs. The walls of that dark rotunda beyond the fire were for me full hung with the brightest scenes of the new life I had now entered, and they drew with them by association all those that I had passed through before. There, again, was the bright sky, swept by long strings of whizzing life, widening out and streaming toward me in swift descent. There, again, was the stately mallard, or more gorgeous wood duck, relaxing his hold on air and falling a whirl of brilliant colors, or the wary old goose, with drooping neck and folded wing, coming to earth with an impetuous crash.

Succeeding years have hung many a new picture in the memories that surround the camp-fire; but none of them, in all the freshness of youth, shines with more brilliancy than still through the mist of years shine around the camp-fires on the Illinois.—*T. S. Van Dyke.*

The Sora Rail, or Ortolan.

The various species of rails are most interesting and curious birds, and I have included pictures of three different varieties in this book. There is also the Virginia and the yellow rail.

As the sora is the best known, I will refer here more particularly to it.

In what is known as "Tide-water" Virginia, and those portions of Maryland adjacent to Chesapeake Bay, they are more commonly known as "sora," while still further south "rail" is their general name.

Strange to say, there has been much mystery attached to these little game birds.

A map of the entire continent is required to trace the migrations of the sora rail. Briefly stated, it may be said that its range is from the northern shore of Hudson Bay to Peru, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Further still, in fact, for its flights extend to the West Indies.

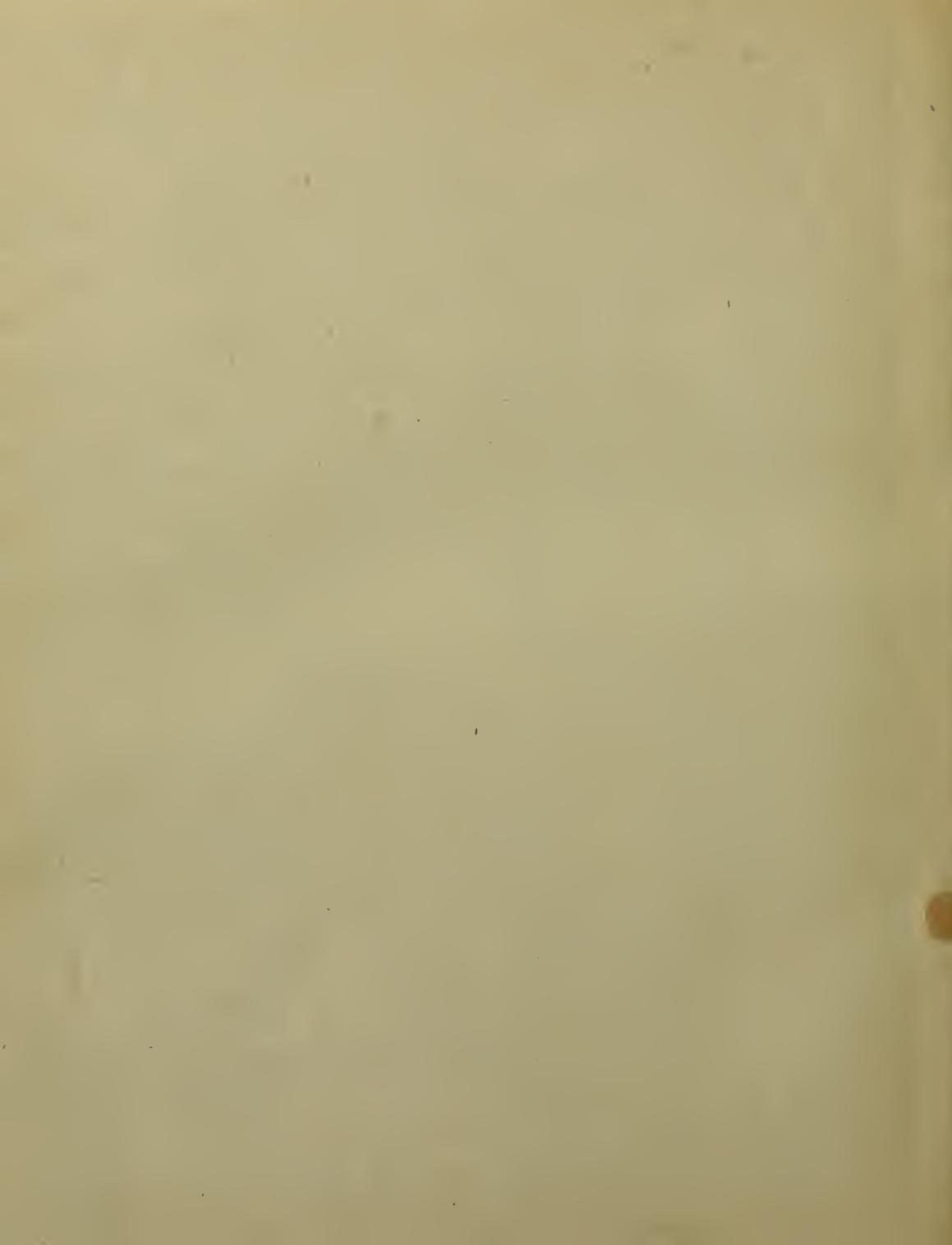
The Biological Survey records that in two successive days two hunters bagged 1,235 sora. This bag has certainly been exceeded by Washington sportsmen on the marshes of the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers. There are men in Washington today who have killed over 300 on one tide.

To sportsmen who have seen them in the short, awkward little flights they make while flying on the marshes, it would seem almost beyond belief that in their Fall and Spring migrations they travel as far as 3,000 miles.



SORA RAIL.

$\frac{1}{3}$ Life-size.



On the Migration of Wild-Fowl.

Presently, from far along the dark heights of the sky, came voices, hollow, musical, confused. It hinted of wide distances voyaged on tireless wings, of a tropic winter passed in feeding amid remote, high-watered meadows of Mexico and Texas, of long flights yet to go, toward the rocky tarns of Labrador and the reed-beds of Ungava.—*Charles G. D. Roberts.*

The migrations of birds, if studied closely, at once surprise and astonish us. The marvelous sagacity which enables them to foresee the seasons, the conditions of the atmosphere and the direction which they have to travel are wonderful.

Man achieves long land and sea voyages by the aid of steam and air ships, directs his course over the trackless ocean by means of the sextant and compass, the calendar warns him of approaching winter, and storms and cold are foretold by the barometer and thermometer. But the bird, without any of these appliances, makes long voyages, directing itself unerringly to a point thousands of miles distant.

Rapidity of flight is the essential attribute of the bird. Nature has concentrated in this faculty all its muscular force.

To great powers of flight the bird adds a keenness of vision which enables it to survey the vast horizon which it looks down upon and to direct its course by distant objects with the utmost precision. The naturalist Buffon declared that the powers of sight possessed by high-flying birds is at least twenty times greater than that of man.

It is true that some varieties of ducks on migrating in the Fall from the North pass through to the Southern resorts of the wild-fowl without stopping hardly at all. Other kinds stop more or less on the way, and it is these particular species that give us our Fall shooting. This explains why some varieties of ducks are plentiful in the Spring and scarce in the Fall. In the Fall *they did not stop* on their migration until reaching Southern waters.

It is remarkable what distances wild ducks cover in their migrations. With the exception of the wood duck, which nests in Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and all of the Middle and Western States, most other varieties of wild ducks nest north of the northern boundaries of the United States. They cover in their peregrinations from Saskatchewan, Alberta and the far North to Florida, Texas and the States bordering on the Gulf of Mexico.

Formerly many of the wild-fowl bred in great numbers in the United States, in all the more northerly States, as Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming and Idaho, but the continual persecution to which they have been subjected has driven them north beyond the confines of the United States in self-preservation.

The Illinois River and adjoining lakes and streams has always been a favored and famous resort of wild-fowl and I have seen "travelers," *i. e.*, ducks making the long migratory flight North in the Spring and very often high in the air, on reaching the Illinois, would descend in great spirals, with many joyous quackings, as if to say, "Here is our home and haven of rest at last!"

"One of the fine coastwise sights in New England is the spring flight of the eider ducks. During the early days of

April, a mile or two off the Chatham bars, I have seen long lines of them, coming all the time, pass on their way north. Each flock is led by a male—a striking creature with his white back, black under parts, and greenish head. The brown females alternate with the males more or less irregularly, and the string of the large, swiftly moving fowl, fifty to a hundred or more in number, is an impressive sight.”

—*Herbert K. Job.*

How long a time wild-fowl stop at various points on their migratory journeys depends on the weather and also of course on how much they are disturbed. If the weather is stormy and cold they remain sufficiently long until the weather becomes more moderate and their instinct tells them to push on North for the nesting season. As a matter of fact, most varieties of wild-fowl can withstand extremely cold weather. In the Fall they remain usually as long as there is open water.

“To make the acquaintance in the nesting season of certain other ducks which do not go to the remote North, we shall have to explore the Atlantic Coast region. It is by no means as easy to find them there as on the Great Plains, yet patient searching will now and then be rewarded. Most of the sea ducks, such as the scoters and old squaws, migrate to Labrador and beyond. Some day I hope to follow them, but as yet my wanderings have not been extended north of the Magdalen Islands. Yet there are some interesting ducks even there to be studied.”—*Herbert K. Job.*

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A great deal has been accomplished in the last few years since our Government has taken a more active interest in protecting our game birds.

The Market Hunters of the Sunken Lands

The wild ducks from their Southern lagoons pass.—*Isaac McLellen.*

BY J. B. THOMPSON.

Where unrestricted by banks, Little River, in southeast Missouri, spreads far across the level surface in a series of wild, untameable swamps. It is a wonderfully enticing feeding ground for ducks, with its submerged wilderness of timber, with its great swards of smartweed, with its stately beds of Yonkapin, watery meadows of trenchant saw grass and defying breaks of the omnipresent elbow grass.

Its overflow is traceable to the earthquake of 1812.

A small river darting from its source in the hills, on reaching the alluvial lands attempts the colossal task of draining an immense territory, and, finding itself incapable long before half of its course has been attained, floods the surroundings with a series of lakes, ponds and sloughs, even far back into the segregations of timber, where the sun never meets the earth except in Winter.

It is only a few miles from the Mississippi, so naturally it is the feeding ground of the big flights during the Fall and Spring pilgrimages. But should there chance to be open water throughout the Winter, as frequently happens, the ducks remain. No doubt they consider that it would be a squandering of Nature's bounteousness, with an assortment of food and balmy weather conditions, to travel further south.



SHOVELLER
(*Spatula clypeata*)
About $\frac{3}{4}$ Lifesize.

The miasmic waters afford a semi-amphibious population a living. The ducks are the main source of revenue; or, rathey, they were. But the fish, frogs and fur-bearing animals are as eagerly sought and are money producers not to be underestimated. On the knolls and high ground, in and away from the main overflow, turkeys, deer, squirrels and quails are to be found in abundance. There are a few bears still remaining in the swamp, but they are sagacious enough to keep away from the traveled paths of man.

What brought the original inhabitants there, can only be guessed at; but what effected their permanent stay was the supply of game and fish, and the strange lure of association with wild life. That they would and can remain in the swamps through periods of the year when swarms of mosquitoes and myriads of torturing gnats are at their worse is inexplicable. No man, unless inured to the pests, can remain in the swamps at night unprotected, as its inhabitant, or for even an hour without suffering untold misery.

Some of the residents at present are outcasts from the warring factions of Reelfoot Lake, which is only a short journey across the Father of Waters. There is a constant pilgrimage between these two sunken-land abiding places, yet there are many who never vouchsafe the reason of their presence, or their former occupation, for they are never questioned about it; if they are willing to abide by the unwritten laws of the swamps, they are made welcome. The older class, however, indicate conclusive proof of the former stand of the French. Not only their countenances confirm it, but their names certify to their origin. Godair, De Lisle, La Forge, Du Priest, and other names smacking of the Gauls, evince the blood of the pioneers that settled in the swamps near New Madrid over a century ago.

Despite their industries, they are by no means gregarious. The only place at which they ever congregate is at the shipping docks, where the work of loading their shipments on cars, and caring for visiting sportsmen, requires several families.

The old-timers, having erected shanties on piling and floating docks, far back in the overflow—live contentedly. When not in pursuit of the wild creatures, they care for their live decoys, and mend their nets, but no attempt is made to cultivate as much as a small garden—presuming they had the inclination—for they do not reside near enough to *terra firma* to do it.

A commerce in fish, frogs, game and furs having been established with the large cities, and fostered by the insidious influence of the duck buyers, professional jealousies disturbed the serenity of the wilderness. So long had they recognized the products of the swamps as solely their own by right of occupation, which also involved the opinion that they were at liberty to rule the territory, that they became obsessed with the notion that the visit of the sportsman was an intrusion, meant to destroy their power in a country which they had so long claimed as their own.

The outside world has but a faint knowledge of the ways of the swamper. He is surprised to discover among them a class of natives that will refuse to pilot them through the ducking grounds for a fee of five dollars a day. It is not astonishing, however, to the man who is acquainted with them, especially when he realizes that they are capable of earning twenty-five dollars in the same length of time shooting ducks, which they can dispose of the same day to the buyers at the docks.

Every resident capable of firing a gun was a market hunter, and is yet, if the laws only permitted him. The older residents are taciturn, and refuse to mingle with the city element, but they are hospitable when occasion warrants it. The greatest display of friendly feeling comes to light when they invite an outsider to pole a boat into their blind and shoot from it.

Long before the flight arrives, the hunters hold a conference. Each man is allotted a stand for the season, and none of their number can be induced to trespass on the territory of one of their fraternity. If a visitor evinces the slightest inclination to jump a claim, he is immediately invited to get out, or shoot it out with the local claimant. As the visitor comes for the sport of shooting ducks, and not for an opportunity of testing his marksmanship, he invariably withdraws gracefully and without comment.

During the duck flight the native shoots persistently from blinds erected in the flags. If they are not working over the decoys, they resort to wading far back in the timber where the ducks are feeding on mast.

Their first venture at ducks commence in July, at wood ducks—"woodies," as they are called—just as the young ducks are about two-thirds grown. Wood ducks are reared in the swamps in countless numbers. Refusing to kill the "woodies" in Spring, the swamper depends on their increase to provide him with Summer money. They are hurried to the market, packed contrabandly in barrels of iced fish.

At the opening of the wood duck shooting, the sport is pitifully tame. The birds are not fully feathered, and fall easy prey to the wielders of pump guns. The pursuit of them is only a preparation for what is to follow, and is

resorted to because it is the only game for which there is a demand at the time. The main supply of wood ducks is either killed out, or has taken refuge in the lugubrious recesses of the flooded timber areas before the sportsman has a day's sport with them.

When the big flight of mallards arrives in the Fall, the work of slaughter begins in earnest. Piles upon piles of ducks are heaped before the buyers on the docks, and the swamps reverberate with the incessant cannonading of hundreds of shotguns. There is no excitement to the killing of the ducks; it is ridiculously easy, the number is so great. It is merely a matter of dropping the ducks in the proper places, in the open water. For even the market hunter admits that one-half of the ducks shot are never recovered from the jungle of weeds and saw grass. Some of the Owl City hunters assert that the number of greater.

The professional, cognizant of the hidden passageways through the innumerable marshes, pre-empts the choicest "leads," and covers the open water near them with countless live decoys. Should, however, an undesirable member locate close by, or sufficiently near to jeopardize his "lead," he goes quietly to work in a manner of his own, which eventually forces the unwelcome squatter to move elsewhere. Yet he will be entirely ignorant of why the ducks obstinately refuse to turn for his living deceipts.

During the lull in midday shooting, the native creeps stealthily in his light-draft boat, through secret passages in the grass. When he arrives within close proximity of his competitor, he splits the end of a cane, inserts a piece of mirror or bright metal, and, driving the cane in the mud, leaves the radiant object flashing upward. Every



Canvasback Duck Shooting, Long Lake, Illinois. Graham Brothers
and Patrick Griffin.

duck on the "lead" beholds the glistening object, and avoids it long before they are within the gunners' range. Where no glass or bright metal is available, white paper is strewn here and there in the flags. It accomplishes the same end. A duck from its lofty elevation descries with its acuteness of vision the fluttering paper, although the occupant of the blind is unable to discover anything out of the ordinary.

The market hunter of the Sunken Lands has much to commend him above his kind in other places. Though he may sit complacently in a blind and kill a hundred ducks in a day, he does not resort to the swivel or large-gauge gun for results. His customary weapon is the 12-gauge pump gun. He has faith in no other, and has always been able to accomplish large kills with it. Singularly his occupation is limited to certain days in the week.

No persuasion can lead him to violate the unwritten agreement of allowing the flight a rest on Sunday. He is to be praised also—and the same cannot be said for the average city sportsman—for his absolute refusal to molest the ducks near a roost.

Roost-shooting, which is the most vicious system of wanton slaughter, is indulged in too frequently by the hanger-on of the swamps, not the genuine native, and unfortunately, he has been encouraged in this by the example of the city sportsman.

The writer appreciated a neat way the "Little River bunch" prevented an invasion of roost shooters.

At the roosts in the neighborhood of Five Hundred Acre Bend, a party of city men, guided by a Reelfoot outcast, dropped in for the sole purpose of bombarding roosts.

The market hunters got wind of it. At sunset, in the flag stands close by, they lighted balls of tow saturated with coal oil. The gunners stationed at the roost were unable to behold the small flame, but the ducks circling above refused to drop in as was their custom at night.

Many have had the pleasure of meeting excellent characters among the older market hunters. Aside from their insistence that ducks were born to be shot and sold—"if not, what would be the use of them"—they have many noble qualities. They are unselfish, unquestionably honest, and are obliging in every way.

Of course, with the lid so tight on market hunting, it has developed among them an animosity toward any outsider. But if you are not a game warden, they will exert themselves to their utmost to make your stay an agreeable one. It is regrettable that, with the exception of a few in the vicinity of the shipping docks, scarcely any of them can read or write. All the information they obtain on the subject of game laws is related to them at third hand, garbled and so distorted that their conception of the intent of the law is, at the least, very vague.

The morals of the younger generation hugging closely the railroad, are very much lower in their standards than those of the old swamper. The young men visit the towns occasionally, load up on bad whisky and become really dangerous citizens. From long preying on visiting sportsmen, they imagine themselves overly shrewd, and in consequence they are very conceited in their knowledge of swamp lore. After a debauch, they develop morbidly antagonistic tendencies toward all visitors. The depressing

effects of malaria, combined with the brand of settlement whisky they imbibe, has driven them to some atrocious deeds. When their ready money is expended, they push out secretly in their shell of a boat and kill ducks no matter what season of the year it is. The birds are easily disposed of to unscrupulous buyers.

It is a good thing, however, that they usually settle their difficulties among themselves, for none seem to care what happens to them in the overflow.

How daring some of them become can be drawn from the history of the Big Lake troubles.

The market hunter is no better shot than the average experienced hunter. The mystery attached to his wonderful prowess is nothing more than a steadfast refusal to take uncertain chances on his game. No doubt, under the same conditions, he will kill more ducks than the amateur, but he will not risk the hard shots, which the everyday outer considers inseparable from the enjoyment of his pastime.

The most difficult task, perhaps, to be contended with in weaning the market hunter from his beloved profession is the bad effect disseminated by local candidates for the Legislature. The natives only commence to become reconciled to the new order of affairs, and on the lookout for better and less risky employment, when the politician canvasses the swamps and promises these simple-minded people an immediate repeal of the game laws will follow his installment in office.

There is material of interest scattered abroad the Sunken Lands to inspire volumes of readable matter for sportsmen.

“Jack.”

Jack was a dog about the size and build of a Gordon setter. He was evidently a cross between a setter and some variety of spaniel, but had none of the spaniel characteristics. His coat was dark brown, rich and glossy.

What made him still more valuable as an all-around dog was the fact that he would point any of our game birds, such as quail, prairie chickens, woodcock, or jack snipe.

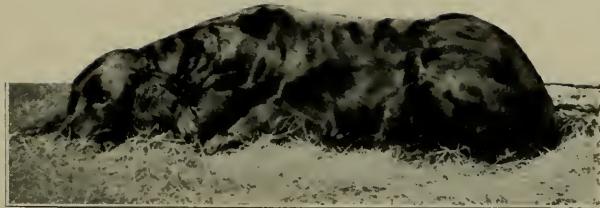
Jack was a splendid retriever, being an excellent swimmer. He had a very sensitive nose, and was a wonder at finding wounded birds in any kind of cover, whether in the rushes, long grass or brush.

He was very intelligent and tractable, something you cannot say for many retrievers, particularly the Irish water spaniel.

When shooting mallards or pintails in the corn-fields Jack would watch the flock closely after you fired to see if any fell at a distance, and if a duck began to lower its flight from the flock he would start after it, knowing the bird was mortally wounded and would fall.

Many times when out with a party of hunters the dog would be missed for a time and directly he would come running up carrying a wing-broken duck, probably wounded the day before, which he had found in the long grass or rushes.

He would cast off to find a bird in any direction you indicated to him by a wave of the arm when at a distance in a corn-field or on marshy ground when he had to retrieve more than one bird from a flock and it was necessary for him to make several trips to get them all.



"Jack."

The United States Biological Survey.

The Biological Survey, a bureau in the United States Department of Agriculture, broadly speaking, is concerned with all the relations of wild birds and mammals to the United States. The work of the bureau is conducted along four principal lines:

1. Investigations of the food habits of North American birds and mammals in relation to agriculture;
2. Biological investigations with special reference to the geographic distribution of native animals and plants;
3. Supervising of national bird and mammal reservations, the preservation of native wild game, and the enforcement of the Lacey Act regulating the importation of birds and inter-state shipment of game;
4. Administration of the Federal migratory bird law.

The Biological Survey, in enforcing the Lacey Act relating to inter-state traffic in game, renders important assistance to the States in really getting results from their regulations regarding the sale of game. Hundreds of cases have been tried under the Act and in one case a fine of \$50,000 was imposed.

The management of the national bird reservations and game refuges is a large item in the work of the Biological Survey. There are now 70 bird reservations and 4 large game refuges. The bird reservations furnish safe breeding places for hundreds of thousands of water-fowl. Some of those sanctuaries, as those at Deer Flat, Idaho, Klamath Lake and Malheur Lakes, Oregon, are important breeding grounds for wild ducks and geese.

Regular reports on the migration of birds are received from all parts of the United States from more than 300 volunteer observers and some from Canada and Alaska. These furnish some valuable records in connection with the administration of the migratory bird law.

Thousands of stomachs of water-fowl have been examined for the purpose of learning what are the most important foods of ducks and geese and the resulting information has been utilized in the preparation of three bulletins, describing the value, distribution, appearance, and methods of propagating more than fifty important wild duck foods.

In connection with the administration of the migratory bird law an investigation is being made of the present statute of migratory species in various parts of the United States. In co-operation with this work the section of Economic Investigations is making a survey of the duck food plants in important breeding and wintering areas, upon the results of which will be based recommendations for the improvement of conditions. The results, published together, will form an invaluable stock of information for use in connection with the measures taken to increase the food supply of our wild-fowl and otherwise to conserve this valuable National asset.

To summarize: The work of the Biological Survey is helpful in some way to every citizen of the United States. To those who are especially interested in wild-fowl, the foregoing account makes clear, that the problem of preserving and increasing the numbers of their favorite birds is one that the Biological Survey is attacking from several sides. Valuable results already have been attained and with the cordial co-operation of sportsmen of the United States the future holds promise of much greater things.

Queer Experience of a Duck Hunter Shooting in the Overflow.

Within the shadow of the distant shore, a solitary loon swam lazily.—*Rhymes of Stream and Forest.*

My brother and myself were camped below Hennepin on the Illinois and were shooting in the overflowed corn-fields and timber lands during the Spring flight. We had our camp on a little knoll on the river bank about a mile and a half below Hennepin and it was the only piece of land for several miles along the river bank that we could discover which would not be submerged when the river began to rise, as it would rise and fall every few days following storms.

One morning I left the camp for a day's shooting in my boat, not knowing just where I was going to locate for the day, and thought I would prospect around until I could find a favorable spot to set out my decoys. There were ducks constantly on the move overhead. Occasionally I would get a shot at a flock of mallards over the tops of the trees.

I was back some distance from the main channel and I finally returned to the river and crossed it to the other side. I could see nothing of our camp and estimated I was about three miles below it on the river. I had not been able to keep the points of the compass very well, as I later on discovered.

Although I preferred to shoot mallards to bluebills, in the early part of the afternoon I ran across a spot that the bluebills seemed to greatly favor as a resort and I could not resist setting out my decoys for a while. It was evidently a pond when the river was at a normal stage and was surrounded by willow trees, making an excellent

cover for a boat. At a little distance I could see the large oak trees bordering the Illinois, but the whole country was under water and you could row in any direction.

Before long the bluebills began to return and I had some excellent shooting. I was back from the main channel of the river about 150 yards.

Late in the afternoon I happened to glance across the river and something white caught my eye. I looked closer and was surprised to see our tent on the opposite side of the river. I was astonished. How in the world did I get where I was or had the tent moved? I could swear I had rowed five or six miles and was away below our camp on the river. In truth, I had been directly across from our camp on the river all afternoon and had just discovered it. I had really made a circuit of five or six miles and had returned nearly to where I had started from, except *I was on the opposite side of the river!*

* * *

There is a stretch of swift water on the Des Plaines River near its mouth, and I once floated in my hunting boat within gunshot of a large flock of goldeneyes who were feeding in a small bay just off the main channel of the river, and as they rose I fired two shots and six ducks fell. The flock flew away on down the center of the river and after they had gone some distance suddenly one of the flock closed his wings and fell dead in the stream. The balance of the flock continued on and soon another one fell, then another and another, until four had fallen. As I went on down the river the four ducks were picked up one at a time, each some distance from the other, and all being stone dead. The last one was more than a mile from where I had shot into the flock. A tenacious bird, the goldeneye.

Shooting the Bluebill Over Decoys.

"Their black heads skim the blue tops of the billows."

Shooting over decoys has always been the most favored method of duck shooting, and of all ducks that fly none decoys more readily than bluebills or butterballs, as they are called in some localities. There are really two varieties, the greater and lesser scaup ducks. The ring-bill is also very similar, being sometimes confounded with the bluebill.

When you have found a spot where they are feeding, drive them away without shooting at them, set out your decoys, and directly they will begin to return.

I have had bluebills come into the decoys while I was sitting in plain sight in my boat among the decoys after retrieving some birds. I have also had redheads do the same thing. Needless to say, it is rare that any other kind of ducks are so incautious.

One Spring day when the bluebills were flying well I made a bag of forty-six at Au Sable. I had a boat at the lake and shot over decoys and could easily have made a larger bag by remaining longer, but I thought forty-six sufficient.

In the Spring of 1894 my brother Henry and I killed 130 ducks in two days at the mouth of the Des Plaines River. The bag consisted of about sixty redheads, eighteen canvasbacks and the remainder were bluebills.

From my hunting diary I find that the largest number of successive successful days' shooting I ever had was in the Spring of 1888, when I bagged 400 ducks in ten days.

Hunting Bluebills in New England Waters.

Far in the west, the yellow sun went down.—*Rhymes of Stream and Forest.*

Though the scaups are classed scientifically among the “sea ducks,” they seem to me to be found almost as much on fresh water as on salt. A great many of the greater and lesser scaup frequent the large ponds, and take good care of themselves, not minding the decoys nor allowing themselves to be approached. I have seen, and taken, the ring-necked scaup occasionally.

The other sea ducks that come into the ponds do not fare so well. I refer to the three scoters and the old squaw, or long-tailed duck. They seem bewildered, and will not leave, though it cost them their lives. The gunners soon see them, and paddle toward them down wind. The foolish ducks wait for a fusillade in the water, and then secure another, rising toward the boat. At length all are killed but stragglers, which are followed up and shot separately.

Last Fall, on October 11, I happened to be in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, near Lake Buell, and began to hear accounts of wonderful duck shooting in the lake that day. Almost every family in the community had ducks hanging up in the shed—surf and white-winged scoters. There had been a storm the day before, and toward night an immense flock of these scoters, probably lost and wearied, settled down into the lake. Many were killed that night and the next day. A hundred and fifty-eight was the number of “casualties” reported. Wild geese are also addicted to similar wanderings and disasters, especially in sleet storms, during their flight.—*Herbert K. Job.*

LESSER SCAUP DUCK.

(*Aythya affinis*).

$\frac{1}{2}$ Life-size.



Some American Ornithologists.

No painter can draw a line on canvas like the flight of wild-fowl along the sky.—
Ernest McGaffey.

The pioneer of American ornithologists was Alexander Wilson, a poor Scotch weaver, who came to America in 1794, and, animated by a passionate love of Nature, studied the birds of America in their native haunts, producing a work remarkable for its graphic descriptions of their habits and the beautiful colored plates prepared from drawings made by his own hand with which it is adorned.

Then came Audubon, who, with the advantage of having the observations of Wilson before him, pushed his researches still further and produced the magnificent work in seven volumes which, with its exquisitely colored plates, will ever remain a glorious monument to his genius. Audubon was followed by Dr. Elliott Coues, Ridgway and others.

Of present-day ornithologists I consider Herbert K. Job to have a greater knowledge of wild-fowl than any man in America.

Mr. Job has spent a great deal of time studying our water-fowl, has made several trips to their various nesting places in the North, and is a most interesting and instructive writer and a true lover of Nature.

Mr. Job has written several bulletins on the propagation of wild-fowl for the National Association of Audubon Societies and a number of text-books on conservation and allied topics. Mr. Job favors hunting with a camera instead of a gun.

The Wilson Snipe, or Jack Snipe.

Many hunters think that the sport of hunting jack snipe is more enjoyable than that of any other of our small game. The amateur hunter and marksman usually finds the jack snipe a difficult bird to hit, with his irregular, corkscrew-like flight.

Like deep-water ducks, they always rise against the wind, and fresh ground should always be hunted with the wind at the hunter's back. This gives him many quartering shots at different angles. As jack snipe do not fly in flocks, it is mostly shooting at single birds, and a small number of birds will often furnish the hunter considerable sport.

The jack snipe is somewhat erratic in his habits and you sometimes find him in most unexpected places, under the willows along a river or perhaps near a spring at the borders of a wood.

Unless they have been hunted a great deal, the jack snipe does not generally make a long flight when flushed, and can be readily followed up.

On rainy days they simply will not lie and it is useless to try and hunt them at such a time. They will rise before you get within gunshot, ascending high into the air, and then begin a series of manoeuvres that would do credit to any aeroplane, rising and dipping alternately, and continue this for some time, making a most peculiar and picturesque whirring sound with their wings, which once heard, is not soon forgotten. Some authorities say that this is the courtship of the male bird, but I doubt it.



WILSON'S SNIPE.
 $\frac{7}{9}$ Life-size.

A Remarkable Duck Hunt On Little River, Missouri.

When the woods are tinged with Autumn's brush.—*Isaac McLellan.*

BY J. B. THOMPSON.

The market hunter of the Sunken Lands is gifted with a tremendous acuteness in understanding the habits of wild-fowl. He is singularly correct about what days ducks will come into the decoys, the "lead" which they will follow; his prophecies are almost incredible in their correctness. Then while in the blind he is motionless—a thing of stone—until the instant for execution arrives, and he kills his ducks to fall only in open water. He is a splendid caller, something you seldom see among sportsmen, for they are as likely to call a flock of pintails with the same note used for mallards. They are also able to distinguish the variety of ducks at remarkable distances. They are in this guided solely by the flight of the ducks, says Mr. Thompson in *The American Field*.

The insight of a native, under certain conditions, is nothing less than marvelous. There are times when ducks are in sight everywhere in flight, but nothing can tempt him into the blind, for he believes he is infallible about when the ducks will decoy. He only glances at the water lapping the flags to decide him; and, strangely, while guided by these signs, which are indeed confusing to the average mortal, he seldom reads them incorrectly.

One December evening the writer arrived in the swamps on Little River. It was almost dark. And, as he flung aside his belongings in the guide's camp house, he was

informed that there was an abundance of ducks. That night a north wind drove down mercilessly through the swamps. It howled hideously through the unseasoned and unmatched planking of the small edifice of sweet gum.

My aspirations drooped considerably at the thought of everything becoming frozen during the night, and the flight far off in the South. Just as I anticipated, the next morning an unending sheet of ice greeted my eyes. The weather was bitterly cold. I could hear the soft swish of wings, as I glanced overhead and beheld flock after flock hastening southward.

Entering the house my guide became aware of my disappointment. "Don't reckon we'll git enny ducks today," he said, a quizzical smile spreading over his dark face.

"No, just my luck!" I replied, vainly trying to repress my chagrin.

While we ate heartily of our breakfast, in silence, the strange play of the guide's features puzzled me. When he arose from the table he pulled off his shoes and donned his rubber boots and hunting coat.

"Come on!" he said.

Thinking some strange farce was about to be enacted by Jack, I dressed in the same manner and followed at his heels. The ice was strong enough to bear us, though we hugged the timber, fearing that too close an approach to the river might reveal a weak place only too late.

Jack now cut six long poles of pawpaw. And much as I wished to learn of his intent, I kept apace with him without speaking. He led me to a spread of open country,

close to a clump of saw grass, where I remembered the water was very shallow.

Every glance at the sky marked long lines of ducks, great banded flocks all looking for unfinable open water, or preparing a burst of speed for more balmy surroundings.

Jack fastened his pawpaw poles together with stout cords, until they attained a length of 60 feet. He split the end of one and affixed a small board, which he carried in the folds of his coat. The contrivance resembled a small snow scraper with an elongated handle.

"Now!" exclaimed Jack, "let's git 'nd break a beeg open place in the ice."

We went at it with a will, and soon, by prodigions tramping and jumping, had quite a large space broken before we waded back to the bleak shelter of tawny grass.

Jack shoved his long pole into the water, worked it constantly to and fro, until the water and broken ice was then churned into a miniature wave display.

"Take hold of the pole now, and keep her a-goin, 'nd I'll git to callin,'" he said.

How the ducks came to that one hole of water in the vast swamps no one can realize without having been on the scene. They came in flocks, then in communities of thousands. We secured our limit in a few minutes, but the play of the native was too great a treat to leave immediately. I can never forget how the great clouds of seething wings and startled, raucous notes emanated from the vicinity of that little space of open water. It was almost beyond belief!

The Sand Hill Crane.

BY HAMILTON M. LAING.

Chief of all scouts is old Garoo, the sandhill crane, the wise one of the plainland, he of the five-foot stature, the eye that sees by day and night, and the brain that can plan and reason, says Mr. Laing in *Outing*. He is the chief of the sagaciously strong, for he still survives where his one-time neighbors of the wild have failed. The fleet and wondrous antelope, the proud elk, the giant bison and fierce grizzly and gray wolf have passed from the plainland forever, but old Garoo is yet with us.

Still his sentinel form peers afar from rounding prairie knoll, still his raucous garoo rolls out across the silent wastes, still his long rank swings twice yearly across the continent from the western Canadian prairies to the region of the Gulf of Mexico and back, and ever he defies his arch foe man. A brother in arms and a brother scout to the coyote is he, for of all the teeming things once of the plains, these two alone by their wits and resources have fought their fight and held at least a little of their own.

That he has survived at all speaks volumes for his craft and hardihood; for he is a great bird, magnificent of stature, and it is the way of hunters to seek out such for the killing. And among feathered game old Garoo has the proudest head of them all; yet he has saved it.

To realize him one must hunt him; and to hunt him successfully is to acquire a liberal education in Scoutcraft. Of course, I did not realize all these things about Garoo



until I began to chase him with a camera. Now, after spending a week or two yearly for several years camping on his trail, I doff my hat to him as he goes by, give him the sign and salute him as Chief Scout of the plainland. I have beaten him a time or two but that was when Dame Fortune stacked the cards against him.

It must not be taken that old Garoo and his tribe can be hunted today in very many places. Of necessity he must hold to the open and barren lands; thickly settled country is not for him; his tall bulk is a target too inviting for a rifle and so he eschews the district of the big red barns and holds to the land of the homesteader's shanty and the new-turned furrow. Pioneers of the northwestern prairies know him most intimately.

As a sentinel Garoo is unsurpassed for few birds indeed are so well equipped by Nature. His great stature gives him the range almost of that of a man; his eye is wonderfully keen, telescopically so; it is so near the top of his head that he can peer over the crest of a knoll and see without being seen, and its clear, amber yellow suggests an owl-like vision at night. Though he is big and tall, he is not really easily seen, for his coat is one of Nature's triumphs of protective coloration.

In flight Garoo is the original aeroplane; the man-made product, in spite of its motor, is an infringement.

Few birds show the same attachment between mates or of parents for their young. Indeed, many a crane loses his life through this attachment, for when one bird is shot, the mate or parent is all too apt to throw caution to the winds and haunt the neighborhood until he loses his own life.

Propagation of Wild-Fowl By the United States Government.

A crystal lake among the tree-clad hills.—*Rhymes of Stream and Forest.*

I am indebted to a recent number of *Outing* for the following facts regarding Mr. Job's trips to the far Northern breeding grounds of wild-fowl.

Recently the United States Government commissioned Herbert K. Job and three assistants to go to Northwest Canada to procure specimens of various species of wild ducks for propagation. They encamped at Lake Manitoba, Northwest Canada, and had the co-operation of the Dominion Government. They gathered and hatched out eggs of ten species of wild ducks, raised a large proportion of the young, bringing back about 100 of them for breeding stock in experiments which are now under way. They were late in getting located, and unfortunately the canvasbacks, which are early breeders, had all hatched. This species was the most interesting and important of all, and have never been known to breed in captivity. They were allowed to try it again last year, especially with a view to securing young canvasbacks and of studying other species. The prime requisite was to find a canvasback breeding country.

On the second trip they decided to go to Lake Winnepegosis, in the unsurveyed wilderness of Northern Manitoba. This lake stretches north for 140 miles from a point where a railroad touches it at its extreme southern point. During the long period while the ice is softening the few isolated inhabitants have no communication with the outside world. They reached this lake on the 29th of May. Spring had

only recently come, as the ice had only disappeared the week before. They had with them incubators, brooders, photographic outfits, duck-feed, and so on. Storms of considerable intensity occur on this lake, even in summer. The marshes extend for a mile on each side of the border of the lake, making a splendid nesting place and home for wild-fowl.

On exploring the surrounding country they found large numbers of canvasbacks, redheads, ruddies, goldeneyes, teal, and various other water-birds, particularly the black tern, which was everywhere, and proved to be the most abundant bird of the region. Ruffed grouse were also drumming incessantly in all directions. Already it was nearly hatching time for the canvasbacks, and they hastened to hunt for nests. The nesting location chosen by the canvasbacks was peculiar. Instead of being, as is more usual, placed in clumps of reeds or rushes or areas of these out in the lake or slough, in every case the nests were found built back from small, shallow pools in the marsh, from one to five yards from the edge, in continuous areas of a peculiar sedge. The nest was a mound of dead stems of the sedge, built up almost towerlike, in some cases over a foot above the water. The sedge all around in a circle was pulled up or trampled down, leaving the nest in a little open pond several feet wide, without anything to conceal it, and was visible for some distance. On taking the eggs they were at once wrapped in flannel and placed in pails, thence to be transferred to the incubators on their return to their camp.

Young ducks need green food, and it was hard to provide this in sufficient quantity, till one day in a trip across the lake, they discovered a large concourse of ducks in an area

of water-plants growing up from the bottom of the lake. This proved to be wild celery, on which the ducks were feeding. They brought back a boatload of it, and the young ducks, although they had never seen any, ate it with the greatest eagerness. Thereafter they had a continual supply of it.

Mr. Job noticed, too, that the canvasback, in common with other allied species of deep-water ducks, are slower in feathering than the shoal-water ducks. The pintail, for instance, shows feathers on the sides at three weeks, and is able to fly at ten to eleven weeks. The canvasback shows no trace of feather under four weeks, and even at twelve weeks the flight feathers are still immature.

When Mr. Job and his assistants returned, after spending three months at the lake, they had a thriving family of full 200, comprising the following eleven species: Canvasback, redhead, lesser scaup or bluebill, American goldeneye or whistler, pintail, mallard, gadwall or gray duck, blue-wing and green-wing teal, and American coot or mudhen. All did well except the goldeneye, which did not seem to thrive in captivity. This seems strange, as they are the hardiest of wild ducks. They can subsist anywhere there is open water. They found the canvasbacks the shiest and easily frightened. If a sudden move was made while feeding the young canvasbacks the birds were badly frightened.

The birds have been installed in a game preserve in Connecticut and the United States will endeavor to propagate the different varieties obtained.

Mr. Job says that the ducks are good ducks, docile and obedient, willing to be experimented upon. And he says he cannot help feeling a fatherly interest in them.



The Old Squaw, or Long-Tailed Duck.

The old squaw or long-tailed duck is one of the most unique birds of the duck family. It is a beautiful and hardy bird and is usually found in large flocks on both of our sea coasts. It is only taken at rare intervals in the interior of the United States. A few have been killed on Lake Michigan at intervals.

The old squaw is so named from its noisy habit of continually talking while on the water and frequently uttering musical cries while on the wing.

The old squaw is an expert diver and there are said to be instances where a bird, being shot at while flying low over the water, had dived from the wing and escaped unhurt.

The old squaw nests in the Arctic regions and when preparing to migrate north in the Spring, assemble in large flocks, circling about high in the air and performing many graceful evolutions. The rapidity and irregularity of their flight is remarkable. A flock will start to fly over the water in some direction and will dart around as aimlessly as a flock of pintails on a windy day in the Spring. Their flight is very swallowlike.

The old squaw associates in large flocks even on their breeding grounds, and have been seen in Alaska and the Hudson Bay country in the middle of the Summer in flocks of many hundreds.

Although such a handsome and active bird, the flesh of the old squaw cannot be eaten on account of the strong fishy flavor, as its chief food is shell-fish.

Herbert K. Job says he considers the old squaw duck the swiftest flier among birds.

Hunting the Old Squaw Duck On the Eastern Sea Coast.

One of the prime wild-fowl sights of such bays as Chatham is the exit of the old squaw ducks at sundown. They feed during the winter days at the head of the bay. To see or shoot them, one should anchor in a skiff at the middle of some narrow channel. At length there will come a confused chorus of weird cries, resembling the music of a pack of hounds on the trail—and music indeed it is. Presently a line of fowl will appear, sweeping down the channel. They do not always seem to notice the boat, and I have often had them double right by the bow when I sat up to shoot. There is no swifter flier than this same garrulous “squaw,” and if one hits such a mark very often, he must be an adept. Going at such tremendous velocity, when one is brought down, I have been amazed at the distance that its momentum will carry it, ricochetting over the water, before it can stop.

They appear to rest on the open sea at night, where they are quite safe from molestation. On cold, still days they sit in flocks on the water and their chatter, which often seems to resolve itself into major thirds, is to me one of the finest sounds of Arctic-like nature at this season.

The staple, standard fowl for the hunter is the dusky or black duck, excellent for the table, and one of the wariest of them all.

The goldeneyes also feed in the bays, and, hidden in a seaweed “blind,” one can toll them up with wooden decoys, and have good sport.—*From “Among the Water-Fowl,” by Herbert K. Job.*



Favorite Foods of the Wild Duck.

BY CLYDE B. TERRELL.

There is some kind of attractive duck food suited to practically every type of marshes and waters and soil. Careful study has proven that the following are among the very best and most attractive food for wild water-fowl. Duck potato or wapato, wild rice, wild celery, peppergrass or water cress, a number of varieties of potamogeton, blue duck millet, chinquapins, and chufas.

Not all of these foods are eaten by all kinds of ducks. For instance, wild rice is a food of the marsh ducks, such as mallards, teal, and pintails, while wild celery is a food of the diving or deep-water ducks like the canvasback, red-heads, and bluebills. A wide variety of foods are recommended for attracting various kinds of water-fowl, and providing food at different times of the year.

There are a few plants, chief among them being the duck potato or wapato, which are eagerly sought for by practically all ducks of both marsh and diving species, as well as by many varieties of other water-fowl.

DUCK POTATO OR WAPATO.

(*Sagittaria latifolia*.)

The duck potato or wapato plant produces tender bulbs and shoots that wild ducks are very fond of. Handsome arrow-head shaped leaves and its stalks of delicate white flowers make it a highly desirable ornamental plant. The

plant produces bulbs about the size of a small onion, and starts new plants in three ways, from bulbs, runners, and seeds.

WILD CELERY.

(*Vallisneria spiralis.*)

Wild celery does not resemble garden celery, but is really an eel-grass, growing entirely beneath the water. The plant is adapted to soft mud or loam bottoms, and fresh or slightly brackish water from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 8 feet in depth. The ribbon-like leaves of the wild celery plant at the bottom appear like long wide-bladed grass. From each plant stems as large as a common string and several feet long, run toward the surface. During the late Summer or early Autumn, mucilaginous seed-bearing pods form on the tips of these stems, averaging from one-eighth to one-quarter of an inch in diameter and from 3 to 5 inches in length. It should be remembered that wild celery is a perennial plant, that is, it lives from year to year, and it is not usually until the second or third year after planting that it produces the seed-bearing pods by which it is commonly identified. The plants send out runners like those of a strawberry plant, in all directions. An abundance of new plants are started from these runners, as well as from seed and winter buds, so that after the plants are once rooted there is little danger of their ever dying out.

PEPPERGRASS OR WATER CRESS.

(*Nasturtium officinale.*)

This plant was originally a native of the British Isles and gamekeepers there recommend it highly for planting



HARLEQUIN DUCK.
(Histrionicus histrionicus).

$\frac{3}{2}$ Life-size.

in duck preserves. It has been successfully introduced in a number of preserves in this country and many kinds of water-fowl, especially black duck, are known to be very fond of it.

AMERICAN LOTUS OR WATER CHINQUAPIN.

(*Nelumbo lutea*.)

This is an exceptionally attractive mallard food. The plant is of the nature of a water lily, bearing large, handsome, pale yellow flowers from 5 to 9 inches broad, which makes it an attractive ornamental water plant. The seeds that the ducks are fond of are borne in pits in the flat upper surface of the top-like receptacle remaining after the petals have fallen from the flower. The plant grows best on a mud or loam bottom.

WILD RICE.

(*Zizania aquatica*.)

All marsh ducks, especially the mallard, wood duck, teal, black duck, widgeon, and pintail, as well as wild geese and other water-fowl, are very fond of wild rice. Its graceful panicles of bloom give the wild rice a decidedly ornamental appearance. Besides providing a favorite food in the form of grain and shoots, the dense stalk-like growth provides cover for the birds.

Wild rice has been known to grow in water up to a depth of 5 feet, but it appears to grow best in from 6 inches to $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet of fresh or slightly salty water, and on soft muddy bottoms. Whether or not waters are too salty for wild rice can be determined by tasting the water. If the water is salty to taste, it is too salty. Wild rice seed is generally

sown in the fall, the time that the plant naturally goes to seed. If it has been properly stored, it may be planted in the spring with good results. The seed must be kept wet and never allowed to dry, however, for it is certain that dried wild rice seed will never grow.

NUT GRASS OR CHUFA.

(*Cyperus esculentus.*)

While this food is not at present, perhaps, so widely known as some of the other duck foods which have been mentioned, it has been found that wood duck, mottled duck, mallards and canvasbacks are very fond of its numerous tubers, and that it is the principal element which renders a number of famous hunting grounds so attractive to wild ducks.

The nut grass or chufa is adapted to light, rich, sandy, humus or loam soils around lakes, streams and other waters which are dry in summer, but overflowed in fall, winter, or early spring, to make them available for duck food.

The plant is a heavy bearer, a single plant producing usually about 100, but in some cases as many as 600 of the little nut-like tubers that the wild ducks are so fond of.

BLUE DUCK MILLET.

(*Echinochloa crus-galli.*)

Mallards, pintails, teal and other shoal-water ducks are fond of the seeds, stems, and leaves of this plant, and in some cases it has been found to make up more than half of the diet of certain of these ducks.

The plant is of a grass-like nature with purplish colored seed-heads, growing anywhere from 1 to 4 feet in height. Blue duck millet is adapted to moist, rich soils, such as

along the edges of lakes, marshes, swamps and in wet lowlands of meadows.

POTAMOGETONS.

These are a group of pond plants that compose a large percentage of the food of all wild ducks. There are at least thirty-eight species of this group, but I only select the species that are important as wild duck food.

These plants produce numerous tubers and seeds that are readily sought for by many ducks. Teal are very fond of potamogetons, and large flocks of them are often found feeding in beds of these plants.

♦ ♦ ♦

There is nothing more deceptive than the speed or pace at which a bird is flying. The smaller the bird the greater its speed appears to be. Of wild ducks, the mallard is probably the slowest, and his speed is estimated at from 40 to 50 miles an hour. I would place the wood duck and pintail at about 50 to 60 miles an hour; the widgeon and the gadwall about the same, from 60 to 70 miles an hour; and I do not think there is much difference between the speed of the redhead, blue and green-wing teal, bluebill, goldeneye and canvasback, and I would place their speed at from 80 to 100 miles an hour, depending on whether the wind was in their favor or not. Herbert K. Job says there is no swifter flier among birds than the old squaw duck.

The Quail.

The quail is one of the most popular game birds in the United States and has a wide distribution.

Dwight W. Huntington says he considers the quail our finest game bird.

“Bob White” is a true game bird and deserves all the good things that are said of him.

While the prairie chicken retreats before the advance of civilization and the settling up of a country, the quail does not and will thrive sometimes better in an older settled district if there is a reasonable amount of cover and the Winters are not too severe.

“Bob White” is an optimistic bird and his cheerful whistle is enjoyed alike by the farmer and the sportsman as he sits on a fence post or at the edge of an orchard.

If you have a well-broken dog it adds greatly to your pleasure in quail hunting.

The quail feeds in the morning, and generally retires during the middle of the forenoon to the heaviest cover in the neighborhood.

It is surprising how a quail will stick to a little bit of cover after the bevy has been scattered. When flushed in the timber they will sometimes take to the trees, hiding among the branches, or sticking so close to the trunk of an old oak tree that they resemble a knot.

Quail have increased in some parts of the Middle West since the length of the season has been shortened, and are now fairly plentiful in most sections.



Observations and Conclusions On Duckology.

Where the shadows of the trees unbroken lie.—*Rhymes of Stream and Forest.*

BY DR. FERDINAND BROWN.

It is interesting to the Nature student to study the methods of flight of wild-fowl. According to the theory of least resistance (which the political economist says governs all things), the ducks immigrating would take that country which contained the least number of sportsmen, other conditions being equal. Of course, the elements control the birds' flight to a certain extent. The general direction of the flight, however, is from the northwest to the southeast in the Fall, and from the southeast to the northwest in the Spring. Why they take this particular angle on their long journeys across the country we can only surmise. Perhaps it is due to the general direction of the wind at that time of the year, or maybe on account of general direction of the large bodies of water of the country. Observe the condition of the country that the duck or goose flies over from the time it leaves Canada until it arrives at its Southern destination, and you will see that part of the country which is best supplied with moisture and crops. When the time comes for the general flight to the South, the bird seems to be master of the situation and picks out that route which appeals to it as being the choicest.

While one species will fly from its northern breeding ground to the southern waters in one continual flight, other

species will make the trip in installments, as it were, stopping at various points on the way to rest and feed. It is reasonable to assume that the ducks which fly highest and make the longest trip without a stop have the greatest wing capacity in proportion to their size. In other words, they are geared higher. While a teal duck may fly across your blind at a greater speed than a mallard, it does not follow that the teal would outdistance the mallard in a flight of 1000 miles without stop. Probably the contrary would be true. Different species of ducks take different altitudes in flying long distances, and if we were able to pick out a bird from each species, representing the different altitudes of flight, we could determine to a nicety which was the highest and which the lowest geared bird. And what bird, of the duck family, would we find at the highest flight? For have you not been hunting late in the Fall, near the close of the season, and watched and watched the ducks flying over your blind, high up in the air? And have you not said to yourself that these ducks were ticketed for the Gulf, without a stop-over privilege? Sure you have! What kind of ducks were they? Some of them were too high in the air to tell.

THE AUTOMOBILE AN ENEMY TO OUR WILD GAME.

Did you ever stop to consider what a deadly enemy the automobile has become to our wild life? How it has increased the numbers of hunters in a few years at the ratio of from 10 to 100. A few years ago ten hunters would go out on the opening day and bag a hundred birds, using mostly the double-barrel shot-gun. Now, on the opening day, 100 hunters go from the same locality, armed with the automatic shot-gun, and bag a thousand birds. The auto-

mobile has made this condition possible. If methods of transportation from the town to the sloughs and ponds were the same today as they were before the advent of the automobile, the ambitious hunter would have to go around to all his sporting friends and beg them to go out for a shoot, in order to get up a party. Today (especially on a Saturday night) the hunter has to beg for a chance to go in the auto; he will pay as high as \$5 for a seat in the car for a day and will ride 100 miles in the auto to get a shot at a duck or two. The ease and quickness of transportation of the automobile, and the pleasure derived from its use, has, as it were, developed thousands of new hunters, who under conditions of ten years ago would be indulging in some other less strenuous sport.

THE TRUE SPORTSMAN.

Sometimes have you not felt a little ashamed when you killed ten times as many ducks as you needed, and allowed most of them to spoil, or perhaps gave them away to those who did not appreciate them? Don't you know that the best part of the sport, after all, is to get out with Nature? To get out to your favorite slough or lake and study these beautiful birds; to watch their flight; to see the dance of the butterballs and to watch the bobbing of the heads of the wild things as they swim merrily to and fro? Don't you enjoy the beautiful hills and valleys around this your favorite duck pond? Have you not observed those beautiful sunrises and sunsets, and the changeable skies?

The one who recognizes the existing conditions of the wild things, who pleads for their protection and for the hunter to be merciful and who goes hunting to study Nature and not solely to kill— Ah! he is the true sportsman!

The New England Ruffed Grouse.

There is no game bird that flies anywhere on this continent to be compared with the ruffed grouse—particularly the ruffed grouse of late Fall or early Winter. Of course, the ruffed grouse is a noble bird, no matter where you find him. But he suits the New England country well and that country suits him. He is in his element there, and the sportsman who brings him fairly to bag must be something more than a tyro.

It matters not whether he be found in the hillside, in the big woods, in thick swampland or in the alder swales, he is always the same wary fellow—keen of sight and hearing, and swift of wing. To get him, the sportsman must be alert, else he will be away with a whirr! before the gun can be brought to bear on him. In spite of his great cunning, he will lie fairly well to the point of a good setter or pointer. But the bird dog which can fairly be regarded as a ruffed grouse dog must have a genius for his work. And this genius must be carefully cultivated and developed.

The high-headed dog is desirable for hunting all manner of game birds, but for the ruffed grouse that style of hunting is a necessity. The dog which looks under his feet for this bird will not find him. He may get a taste of the bird's trail, but before he comes within reach of the body scent, the bird will be whirring away at terrific speed.

And what a prize the sportsman has, to be sure, when he kills one of these wary birds over a point! There are more thrills in such a point and such a kill than are furnished by a dozen quails killed over points.—*C. B. Whitford.*



Wild-Fowl in a Storm On the Massachusetts Sea Coast.

There swept o'er lake and wood, the storm's wild roar.—*Rhymes of Stream and Forest.*

I wish I could adequately describe a scene which I witnessed on the old Pilgrim coast at Manomet one 5th of November. Flying gray clouds covered the sky. The wind was northeast, and increasing every hour. A few boats went out early but soon came in, as the sea was becoming dangerous. Low over the frothing ocean flew lines and lines of wild-fowl, scudding from the north before the blasts. They were in sight all the time. Before one flock had passed southward, several more were to be seen coming, at times six or eight flocks in sight at once.

By 10 o'clock the rain began to beat spitefully on our faces as we stood on the bluff with awed spirits watching Nature in her passion. By noon the wind had reached hurricane force. Flocks of fowl were fairly hurled in over the rocks, many of them to be shot down by the "station" men and others, who stood ready. I made no effort to estimate the number of that day's flight. Thousands upon thousands of ducks were there, and of all kinds. The surf thundered in upon the rocks, and clouds of spray flew up over the top of the bluff.

In the morning when I opened the door and stepped out, a blast struck me that made me gasp for breath and cling to the railing. Blinded with the stinging sleet, I could not see whether fowl were flying or not. A neighboring barn had disappeared, lying in fragments on the rocks around the Point. Everything was white with snow. Winter had come upon land, ocean and wild-fowl.—*From "Among the Water-Fowl," by Herbert K. Job.*

Mallard Shooting at Coke's Bayou.

Coke's Bayou is a beautiful place. It is the sheet of water lying between Au Sable Island and the south bank of the Illinois River. It is not properly a bayou. I have shot ducks, geese and quail on the island. There are many small islands between the large island and the shore.

I was shooting mallards near the lower end of Au Sable Island in late November and it was a bitter cold day and late in the afternoon began to freeze rapidly.

My decoys were becoming small cakes of coated ice, but as the birds were coming fast I disliked to leave such fine sport. No preliminary circles by the large flocks of mallards. As soon as they sighted the decoys they set their wings and came right in against the strong wind. Then it was up to me to do the rest. I killed twenty-seven mallards in a few hours.

When it was nearly night I managed to get my decoys up and started down between the island and shore for home.

When I reached the extreme lower end of the island (this is one of the largest islands on the upper Illinois) I then discovered the ice extended in a solid field from the island to the shore and I was cut off from getting into the main channel of the river. Time was valuable if I was to get home at all.

Rowing back a short distance, I pulled my boat out on the island, dragged it across the island to the main river channel where it was still open and started down the river six miles for home.

I made it all right, but an hour after I landed my boat after the six-mile row the river channel was closed entirely.

"The shadows lengthen and the daylight fades."



Coke's Bayou at Sundown (Au Sable Island), on the Illinois River.
Photo by W. M. Lyon, Chicago.

The Plumage of Wild-Fowl.

The strength of the sun in his yellow feet,
The purple of night asleep on his breast;
The green of a thousand Junes on his crest,
And across his wing Heaven's own bar of blue.

—*A Day on the Yukon.*

There is a great variety of coloring of the feathers of the wild duck. Each species has some particular coloring that distinguishes it. And all have a patch of brilliant color on the secondary feathers of the wing with a narrow strip of white on each side of it. This is called the speculum. The blue-wing teal has a light-blue spot, the green-wing a green spot, the mallard a dark blue, the pintail a light brown, the gadwall a dark brown, and the wood duck a combination of several colors with beautiful iridescent feathers. For delicacy of coloring and exquisite tints the wood duck is the handsomest bird on this continent and when in full plumage worthy of comparison with many of the radiant tropical birds.

Then the male bird of each species has a distinguishing color on its head and neck. The mallard drake has a beautiful velvety green, the pintail a rich chocolate brown, the redhead a light chestnut color and the canvasback a dark chestnut edged with black on the crown of his head. And always it is the male birds who have the most beautiful feathers. The female is most soberly clad. How different in the human family! There the female has all the fine feathers and want more.

Certainly a flock of redheads are a glorious sight on a Spring morning with the reflections of the rising sun glistening on the handsome chestnut coloring of their heads!

The Goldeneye, or Whistler.

The goldeneye or whistler, as it is sometimes called, is one of the most cautious of all our wild ducks, and his sharp eyesight will detect the gunner hidden in a blind watching a stool of decoys when nearly any other species of ducks will come in without any preliminaries. It is extremely difficult to stalk them from the bank of a river or lake, also, as some of the flock are continually on guard.

The goldeneye is extremely tenacious of life and it requires hard hitting to secure them.

They are very hardy and I have known them to remain all Winter season after season on the lower Kankakee, frequenting several stretches of water that do not freeze.

The whistling sound made by their wings in flight can be heard a considerable distance. The goldeneye usually nests in a hollow tree.

The goldeneye frequents the sea coasts as well as inland waters, and is an expert diver, and often utilizes this skill in procuring mussels for food.

While feeding largely on shell-fish, it also frequents the wild rice fields and fresh-water marshes near the coast. There is little danger of the goldeneye becoming extinct, in my opinion. They are too well fortified by Nature with caution, and are in general a cunning and wary bird.

The goldeneye ranges throughout almost the entire United States, breeding throughout the northern portions of the North American Continent and in Winter migrating to the extreme Southern States, and sometimes even to Cuba.



GOLDEN EYED DUCK.

With the Canvasbacks at Au Sable Lake.

Somewhere the ripples on the water
In silver patches rest
Then slowly fade.

—*Rhymes of Stream and Forest.*

Several good-sized flocks of canvasbacks had been feeding undisturbed at one end of Au Sable Lake for a number of days and I had been watching them but had not molested them as I awaiting the proper time for a "killing." I knew they would not leave unless some other hunter should get in there ahead of me. However, I was on the river every day and knew where the other hunters were shooting most of the time. Besides, it was hard and slow work getting in there with a boat, so I did not fear competition, and some of the other hunters did not have canvasback decoys.

Au Sable Lake lies in the Illinois River valley and is too far from the river to carry a boat over conveniently. The main body of the lake is about three-quarters of a mile long and is fed by springs at one end. At the other end of the lake there is an outlet by means of a small creek which winds its tortuous way through some small ponds and heavy timber to Au Sable Creek, a larger stream, which flows into the Illinois River. The navigation up this small creek is by no means easy, as there are logs lying across the channel at various points and the volume of water is not large.

When I decided the time was ripe, I got an early start one November morning, with fifty canvasback decoys in my

boat, and after a couple of hours of hard work succeeded in reaching the waters of the lake via this small creek. I drove the ducks away from where they were feeding without shooting at them and set out my decoys. Soon they began to return, and I had some excellent sport.

During the afternoon I had an unusual experience. A flock of five canvasbacks came into the decoys directly towards me, as the wind was off shore, and as they were hovering over the decoys with their heads towards me and had slackened their speed and with outstretched feet were about to alight, I shot the first barrel of my Parker at them where they were slightly bunched together. At the report of the gun three of the grand birds fell. Taking aim at one of the survivors, just as I pulled the trigger the fifth bird came directly into line with the one I was aiming at and when I pulled the trigger both birds fell at the discharge of the second barrel.

I can remember of killing four out of a flock of five ducks several times when they have came into the decoys, but this is the only time I can remember of killing an entire flock of five birds. I felt rather guilty afterwards.

* * *

Altogether, I have found the nests and egges of nineteen species of duck and seen the young of one other. The breeding habits of wild ducks were absolutely unknown in Audubon's day, and even to the present little has appeared in books about them.—*Herbert K. Job.*

* * *

The golden plover is a splendid little game bird. They are a bird of the prairies and also are fond of frequenting ploughed fields. Being very swift on the wing they afford excellent practice in wing shooting. The general coloring of the bird is dark grayish blue, mottled with gold spots.

Crane Lake as a Game Refuge.

Game refuges in the United States have been increased by the addition of Crane Lake, Illinois. It has been leased by the State of Illinois for a term of years, with the privilege of renewal. Marsh Island in the Gulf of Mexico, to which Mrs. Russell Sage has donated liberally, and the E. A. McIhenny game sanctuary in Louisiana, have been the means of preservation of millions of bird life. One dollar expended in the direction of establishing sanctuaries and game refuges where, unmolested, game can breed and multiply in the manner adopted by nature for wild-fowl will prove more prolific of results than a hundred dollars expended in hand raised and home cultivated wild-fowl, which are thereby domesticated. Big Lake, Arkansas, once the home of the market hunter, has also been added to the list of game refuges by the Federal Government.

Crane Lake is a body of water two and one-half miles long by one mile wide and Murry Howe says it is the greatest resort for wild-fowl in America of its size. Mr. Lawrence Alberts is in charge of the lake and stated that in his twenty-five years' experience with wild-fowl he had never seen such a body of birds as were centered on Crane Lake late last Fall.

The aggregation of birds was a body at least one and one-half miles long and 200 to 600 yards wide. They came there from every section of the state to roost. Ninety per cent were mallards. In the morning they would go out to feed, returning from 3 to 6 p. m. by the millions. They fly very high on the flights. When directly over Crane Lake they seem to stop and sift from the air by the million. "It looks like a duck funnel" as they return to the bosom of Crane Lake.

The Black Duck.

The habitat of the black duck is generally confined to the Eastern States, being especially plentiful at Currituck Sound. It is not at all numerous in the Middle or Western States, and in some parts is called locally "black mallard," evidently not being known as a separate species. They associate with mallards to some extent in the Middle West and I have many times seen two or three black ducks in a large flock of mallards.

The Florida black duck is a closely allied species, with similar habits, and is found in Florida and along the Gulf Coast.

In its Eastern resorts the black duck is very wary, remaining on the ocean during the day and only venturing to the inland ponds at night to feed.

In the struggle of the survival of the fittest, the black duck has learned its lesson so well that it is still fairly numerous in localities where less wary birds have become greatly lessened in numbers.

"The black duck is the woodcock of the water. Unlike other ducks, he towers when he leaves the decoys—when he takes wing in any instance. He springs at times twenty feet into the air with one flap of his wings. He is the greatest of all the wild-fowl game; the king of all the ducks. The wisest bird of them all.

"They are best taken from a point near a favorite feeding creek when the tide is low late in the day or very early in the morning.

"Although fond of salt water, the black duck is a point, creek, and pond duck."—*The Wild-Fowlers*.



BLACK DUCK.
 $\frac{1}{3}$ Life-size.

Wild-Fowl at Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee.

Upon our approach to Reelfoot Lake we could see great blankets of ducks spreading themselves across the sky, shutting out the light and filling the air with the roar of their myriad wings. Many of the flocks were headed for the lowlands of the Mississippi, but others were dropping into the Great Stopping Place between the Great Lakes and the gulf, our volcanic lake. Who knows but that the Keeper and Preserver of all game did not wrinkle up this little place upon the face of Nature in order to create a half-way resting place for His feathered children?

Pretty soon down they came! Out of the sky by the hundreds they swept, fine big mallards.

As we returned to camp our guide glanced sidewise up at the moon and said: "Boys, we ain't goin' to git no ducks termorrer!" And we didn't. According to the usual protective instincts of all wild things, the wild ducks of Reelfoot Lake will feed upon the wild celery and the rich trapanatans at night if the moon is shining and will rest in the daytime. During this period Mr. Hunter will look in vain for the sign of a wing. He may find the spectacled coot standing idly about in the shallows and looking wise, but that's all. The ducks are rafted out on the lake and on the Mississippi.

As we looked back into that queer volcanic graveyard, that city of the dead trees, we hoped that this great Stopping Place for the birds, made in a moment's thought by the Creator, might not prove a shut-in sepulchre for the migratory fowl, the movements of which are the strangest phenomena of all the clock-like automaton of Nature. Good sportsmen will not make it so.—*Robert Lindsay Mason.*

The Philosophy of Duck Hunting.

The brilliant mallard, and the teal,
With eye of light, and wing of steel;
All gather in the Autumn day,
To haunt the waters of the bay.

—Isaac McLellan.

BY EDMUND J. SAWYER.

Lest the reader infer a tenderfoot want of sympathy, not to say a little positive preaching, from an article on duck hunting in which little is said of shooting, the writer deems it proper to explain at the start that he is a shooter by instinct and training. As such he is well aware that the peculiar joy of the successful shooter is beyond his poor power to add or detract, even if it would, says Edmund J. Sawyer in *Field and Stream*.

Anyway, why does one keep on going after ducks? Surely it is seldom for the food value of the game shot. Economy, time-saving, availability, horse sense, safety of life and limb, an ordinary liking for a dry skin—all would clearly point to choice cuts at the market if it were a question of food.

Next in persuasive power to the actual shooting, if not indeed before it, must undoubtedly be reckoned the excitement of the hunt, properly so called; the joy of alert preparedness; the uncertainty of what will happen next, the play of the fancy as to its possibilities; the hundred and one little false alarms, as when a muskrat splashes somewhere out of sight among the reeds, or the gun is momentarily leveled at a scared bittern mistaken for a duck, or a



bird destined to prove only a kingfisher, but looking for all the world like a teal, comes straight for your decoys. The love of being fooled! Does that explain all the rest? A little, ever so little, of the fleshpots of Egypt (your wife will tell you Egypt is right), and considerable of the tin-horn excitement of the circus! Is that duck hunting? Does such a toy magnet draw the same hunter day after day, season after season, to fields where he bags only an occasional bird?

If that were the case, what a libel on nature! What an unanswerable argument as against the pleas of the teeming ranks of nature-lovers—that a vast army of intelligent men goes every Fall into the “haunts of nature,” even though bent on shooting, and looks on many of the most glorious of nature’s charms and beauties, but looks unaffected, perhaps unseeing. But, enough; your duck hunter is none the less a nature-lover for being, as it may happen, himself unconscious of the fact.

Sunrise over the flats; the changing surface of the waters; the weather signs; the interesting ways of “coot and hern,” of hell-diver and gull, muskrat and mink, of wild-fowl on the wing, whether in massed bunches or shifting files or lonely stragglers—all so apt to be hopelessly out of range!—these and such as these are things close to the heart of every hunter. The very elusiveness of ducks adds its particular charm to their pursuit. Tantalizing? Yes; to see with what admirable wisdom they will avoid an ambush; with what uncanny judgment flock after flock will pass just out of range beyond the point of land on which you lie concealed. Yet, I repeat, we do seem to like to be fooled.

Who would not like to peer cautiously through the bushes at a wood duck, a mallard, or, say, a green-wing drake swimming there a boat length or two away! What hunter would not walk far for such a sight? But such things come too far between to explain our enthusiasm at mention of wild ducks. What suggestiveness is conveyed when someone casually remarks that he has seen a flock of ducks! What hundreds of scenes, what thrills of excitement have gone to make up the witchery of that term! After all, is it not the quite familiar spectacle of flying "string" or straggler, snaky necks, heads outstretched and gamy flight which wears the best? If you or I could look but once on wild ducks, should we choose wood ducks at arm's length among water-lilies, and not rather a flock of black ducks which should come in, hesitate, take alarm and veer off and away, just out of gun range, or even one solitary, high-flying mallard "'midst falling dew, while glow the heavens with the last steps of day"? Where should we get the truest conception of what a wild duck really is?

Not that a close view necessarily dispels that "gamy" look. In this connection I recall a certain meeting with black ducks. My boat had been pushed into the flags at the edge of a narrow, marshy stream. Here I waited to see what I might see. In half an hour a black duck swam into view, two others following so close at his tail they nearly bumped into him as, seeing me there some 15 feet distant, he stopped abruptly in midstream. What a picture of surprise they were! How wild they looked! With the sinuous movements of their snaky necks and heads they were strong evidence for the reptilian origin of birds. Only for an instant were they nonplussed; the next they

were splashing up and away as if a firecracker had burst an inch behind them.

It is indeed a red-letter day when you come on a bunch of ducks at close range, surprising yourself but not them. You hear their guarded quacking, the splash as one darts playfully after another, the beating of his wings as another rises on his tail like a tame goose in a barnyard. They are so natural about it all, so apparently unconscious of being seen. And yet, on second look, there is still that indescribable look of wildness, that something which somehow dampens any ambition to put salt on their tails. Ah! what watchfulness, after all, can be traced in their very play! Tame! Not with that accusing quiet. You try to feel that you have outgeneraled them, but after a little further observation you are sure to feel the triumph growing small. Finally, splash, splash, quack, quack—they saw you. But how? Anyway, there they go. And see that last pair—first you knew of them; they must have been quietly feeding behind some tuft of grass. But, then, you know, it's always that way; two or three that you had overlooked manage to resurrect themselves and get up from somewhere; it's a little way they have. Funny thing, this outwitting wild ducks.

What is there about that subtle quality of wildness in these birds that it should lay such a powerful hold on us? Why such music in the first approaching whistle of their wings? Why such a knell as it grows faint again in the distance? Mark!—a flock! Are they coming? Going? Have they seen us? Will they see us? Will they be bunched at this point? Will they pass? How far away? When must they take alarm? But *are* they coming? Yes; no—yes,

yes! Now, what may yet change their course? Why, I repeat, this matter-of-life-and-death about it all? Why do our eyes follow these flocks as a cat's the movements of a canary? There! Does it all hark back? Here is a subject for Jack London. The evolutionists are now telling us that we have had many and narrow escapes; that the path by which we at last arrived was indeed long, and thickly beset with all manner of thorns and snares not a few, in so much that our said arrival has been, as it were, by the skin of our teeth.

While we are all more or less aware of the various charms of these scenes, do we all and always truly appreciate the really exceptional elements of beauty which these pictures contain? Bays, ponds, marshy lakes, sluggish streams dotted with blue pickerel weed, white water-lilies and waxy arrowhead, and overgrowth with pondweed, water crowfoot, and eel-grass—the haunts of pintail, shoveler and wood duck. How these things would have appealed to a people like the Japanese! What a wealth of material for screens and panels, as compared with the overworked Mandarin duck and iris? This brings us to a point where we might well forget our gun; where, indeed, we should doubtless forget it were it not forever getting in the way.

One is apt to get but a distorted view even of the birds themselves over the barrels of a gun; tracery of willow and alder, wild rice and marsh grass, the ample reaches of lake or marsh and expanse of sky—is usually a virtual dead loss. The remote blue sky and the ever-changing clouds are terribly gun-shy and keener than a crow to scent your powder and detect your fell designs, though you yourself would scarcely realize it—until you try leaving your gun at home.

"MY HUNTING GROUNDS."



"Moonlight on Lake Butte des Morts, Wisconsin."
A real moonlight picture made at 2 A. M. Negative given
15 minutes' exposure. Courtesy of Clyds B. Terrell.

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